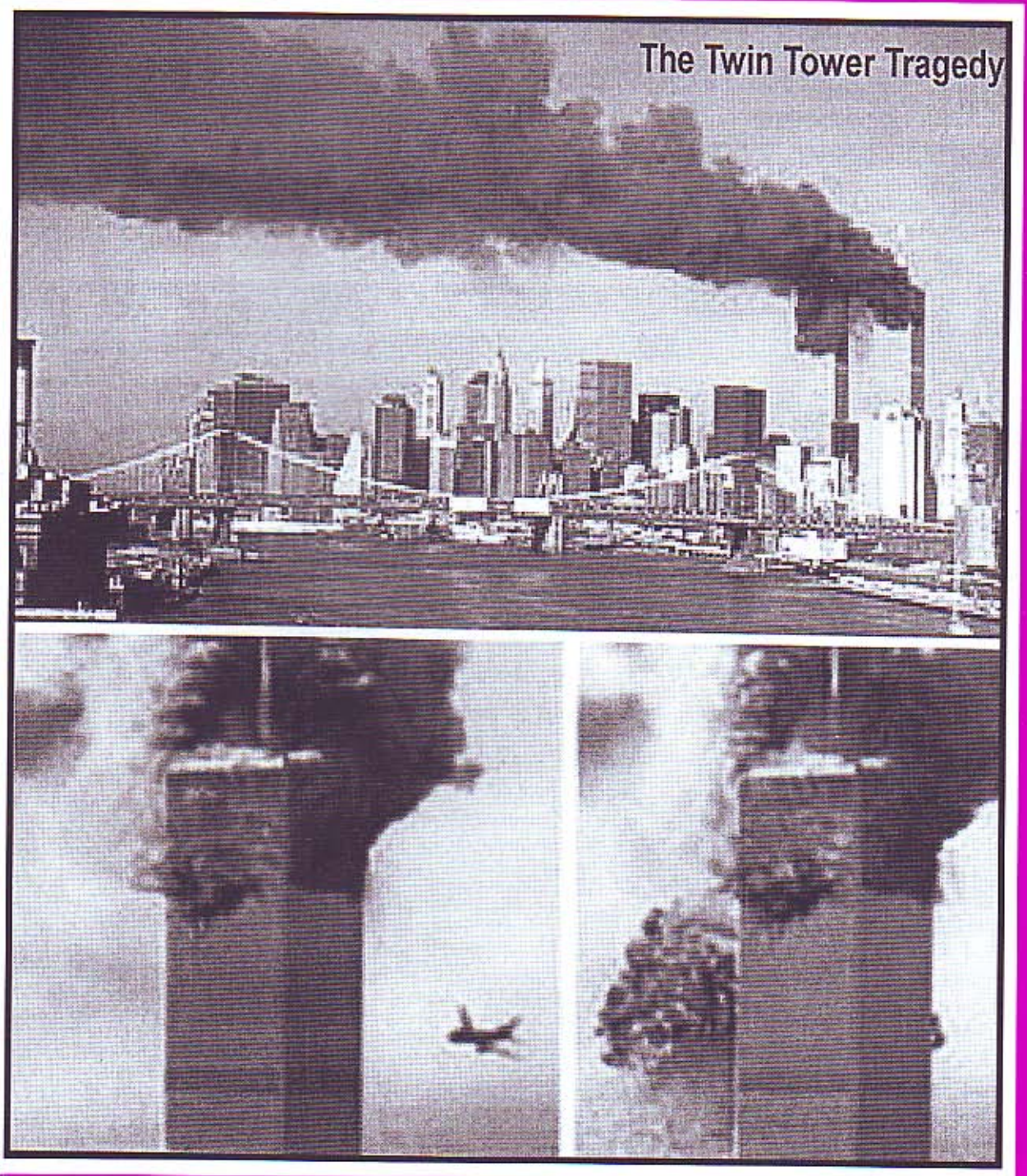
Tamil TIMES

VOL XX No. 9 ISSN 0266-4488 15 SEPTEMBER 2001 90p



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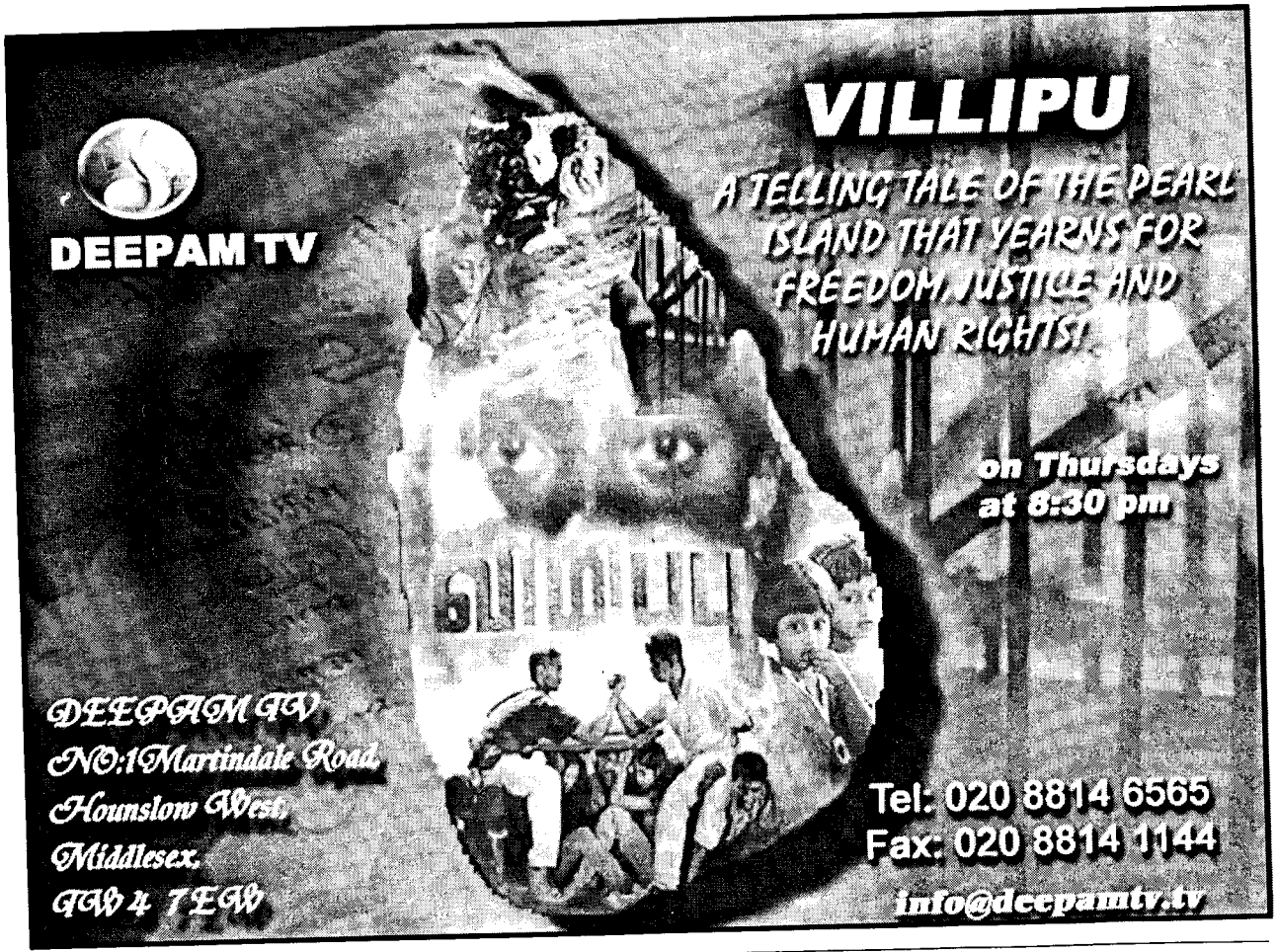

"I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."

-Voltaire

Tamil TIMES

ISSN 0266 - 44 88
Vol. XX No. 9
15 SEPTEMBER 2001

Published by:
TAMIL TIMES LTD
PO Box 121, Sutton,
Surrey SM1 3TD
United Kingdom
Phone: 020 - 8644 0972
Fax: 020 - 8241 4557
Email: prajan@gn.apc.org
editor@tamiltimes.org
admin@tamiltimes.org

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka	£15/US$25
Australia	Aus$45
	(Australian Bank cheques only)
USA	US$35
Canada	Can$40
All other countries	£20.US$35

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor or publishers. The publishers assume no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork.

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The Twin Tower Tragedy

It was the day of ultimate terror. Eleventh of September 2001 will go down in history of the world as the day on which the most outrageous act of terrorism was perpetrated carrying into the homes all over the world apocalyptic images of devastating destruction and death. People all over the world were transfixed to their TV screens watching in disbelief the heartbreaking scenes and the awful reality of the tragedy that struck the United States of America. It was the day on which the country that had not experienced war within its borders since its independence came under attack from international terrorism in the most ruthless and indiscriminate manner totally indifferent to the lives of tens of thousands of innocent people. Their tanks filled with high octane jet fuel, four planes full of unsuspecting civilian passengers in their hundreds were hijacked in mid-flight in one of the most highly organised and coordinated operations and turned into flying missiles. Within a short time, the world witnessed the cinematic tragic scenes of the reality of an inferno of destruction and death. The icons of the oft-repeated American Dream and the visible symbols of US wealth, power and military might - the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon - lay in ruins turned into mountains of rubble and mangled metal.

Buried beneath the resulting ruins were tens of thousands of innocent people who perished in the devastation. The victims came from different nationalities, from as many as 60 countries. Among them must have been those who carried out this unprecedented crime, instigated by and being instruments of yet unseen hands, motivated by a cause of dubious and doubtful justification, their hearts lacking in love for their own lives and filled with insatiable hatred for the victims. All countries and their governments have condemned the attacks in New York and Washington DC, and most have offered support to the United States to help in hunting those who were behind the attacks. No government or non-state organisation has accepted responsibility for the attacks. Even Usama bin Laden, identified as the prime suspect by the US, has denied any connection with the attacks. Thus the hijackers, the identity of many whom has been established, remain disowned in death they so fanatically embraced. One is compelled to ask as to what these hijackers achieved other than killing themselves and thousands of others bringing untold suffering grief to many more. May be that in their self-destruction they succeeded in pricking the pride of the "arrogant" USA and brought it realisation that even the sole Super Power left in the world is also is not invulnerable.

America learned for the first time that it is also vulnerable within its borders to attacks by international terrorism. Though shocked and shaken to begin with, the US together with many western countries has declared a "war on international terrorism" which, according to President Bush, is going to be a sweeping, long and sustained campaign. The target of this "war" is described as all engaged in international terrorism including those countries and governments which "harbour terrorists". Many countries have expressed support in this "war". The NATO has invoked Article 5 of its founding charter that declares that an attack from without on one member would be treated as an attack on all. The USA is engaged in establishing a broad coalition of countries and governments in support of this "war". The military resources of the USA together with that of the UK are being mobilised, and tens of thousands of troops, destroyers and war planes are being assembled and directed particularly to middle-eastern waters. Having named Osama bin Laden as the prime suspect for the attacks, the US government has demanded the Taleban government of Afghanistan to hand over him.

The expectation is that the refusal by the Taleban to hand Osama over would make Afghanistan become a target military attack before long. The Taleban have defiantly declared that if the "infidels" attack Afghanistan, they would declare "jihad" in the name of Islam which it invokes to retain its tyrannical hold on a helpless people ravaged by war, starvation and gross deprivation of basic human rights. The fact that there are three million displaced Afghans suffering in the improvised refugee camps in Pakistan, and that each day hundreds of Afghans are fleeing crossing continents and oceans to find refuge in far away countries of the "infidels" reflects the sheer desperation afflicting the Afghans under the Taleban.

In the meantime, in European countries, governments are frenetically engaged in meetings discussing the tightening of laws and procedures to contain what they describe as international terrorism. A common definition of terrorism, compulsory National Identity Cards, warrant of arrests to be valid Europe-wide and fund-raising for terrorist activities are some of the matters that are receiving their urgent attention.

As war clouds are gathering fast and thick in the horizon, many have expressed concern about the very concept of declaring "war against terrorism", which is based on the assumption that it is against those who use terrorism as a means of war. It implies a conflict with an adversary who can be identified, fought against and ultimately defeated as in the case of the war against Germany under Hitler, or against Iraq when it occupied Kuwait. While many understand the compulsion in the US for an adequate response to the multiple terrorist attacks on 11 September, they doubt the wisdom of pursuing the military course that is being presently advocated by the US and its allies.

WTC Attack, Victims from 60 Countries

Sept 22 - New York City has long drawn people from all over the world. Among the approximately 6,300 dead or missing in the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks are almost 2,000 people from more than 60 countries.

The following is a tentative list of the missing non-U.S. citizens at 4:00 p.m. EST (2000 GMT). It serves as a grim reminder that the attacks on icons of U.S. military and financial power struck countries in every corner of the globe.

Non-U.S. citizens missing or dead: Antigua/Barbuda 3 Argentina 5 Australia 55 Austria 14 Bahamas 1 Bangladesh 55 Barbados 3 Belarus 1 to 3 Belgium 1 to 4 Belize 4 Brazil 8 Britain 200 to 300 Burundi 1 Canada 3 confirmed dead, up to 60 missing Chile 1 China 4 Colombia 208 Costa Rica 1 Czech Republic 10 Denmark 1 Dominican Republic 25 Ecuador 34 Egypt 4 (believed to be more) El Salvador 71 Finland 1 France 10 Germany 4 dead, 96 missing Ghana 1 Greece 30 to 50 (may include Greek Americans) Guatemala 6 Honduras 7 India 250 Indonesia 1 Iran 5 Ireland 4 confirmed dead, up to 40 missing Israel 133 Italy 38 (may include Italian-Americans) Jamaica 7 Japan 23 Jordan 2 Kenya 1 Lebanon 5 (1 suspected of carrying out attacks) Mexico 18 Netherlands 3 confirmed dead, some estimates put missing at about 400 New Zealand 1 Nigeria No official number, but Nigerian press reporting 94 missing Pakistan 200 Panama 3 Paraguay 1 Peru 3 Poland 30 Portugal 4 Russia 96 Slovakia 10 South Korea 30 South Africa 6 Sri Lanka 1 St. Lucia 1 Switzerland 6 confirmed dead, up to 100 missing Taiwan 7 Trinidad/ Tobago 4 Turkey 1 Ukraine 1 Venezuela 3 Yemen 8

Unless otherwise noted, figures have been provided by individual governments, or the U.S. Department of State.

JVP-PA Agreement

Sept 5 -The JVP and the PA signed a Memorandum of Understanding of co-operation on % September at "Temple Trees", Colombo. The agreement was signed by the General Secretaries of the two parties - Tilvin Silva for the JVP and D. M. Jayaratne for the PA. In terms of the agreement, the JVP will extend its support to the PA from opposition ranks, and will take no active part in governance. The PA in turn will have to fulfil the conditions set out by the JVP in lieu of its support.

The conditions include downsizing the cabinet to 20 members, setting up the long proposed independent commissions, the abolition of the executive presidency, elections under a neutral caretaker government, waiving-off outstanding loans given to farmers and suspending price hikes in essential goods for an year. As a first step, the government will present the necessary legal framework for the setting up of independent commissions on the judiciary, elections, police and the public service on September 18.

The MoU was formally exchanged at a ceremony later yesterday afternoon at the BMICH, with religious leaders, intellectuals, trade union leaders and politicians in attendance.

PA General Secretary D. M. Jaya-ratne regaled the historic agreement in stentorian tone, but gave indication that all obstacles had not been cast aside. "We cannot say that we will be able keep to every comma of the agreement. Given the fast changing nature of the society we may not be able to do so. Where we can't fulfil the terms of the agreement, we will seek the assistance of the JVP to make successful changes," he said.

The economic hurdle will be the greatest one, with the IMF and World Bank looming large. The prospect of renegotiating the loan facility by the IMF to accommodate JVP terms was cast aside by MP Mangala Samara-weera. "The MOU will not have impact on the existing agreements. It has been agreed that they will continue. The IMF and World Bank agreements as they are today, will stand," he said.

Tilvin Silva, JVP General Secretary said, "The JVP has not agreed to form a government with People's Alliance. We have come to an understanding with the ruling PA to overcome the present political crisis and to hold a general election after one year under a caretaker government," adding, "All JVP MPs will contribute half of their salaries to the Consolidated Fund for the benefit of all. We urge all officers and even PA MPs to do likewise." he said. He said that the agreement was unparalleled in the history of world politics as no party had ever extended its support without seeking benefit for itself. "This is a decisive moment, where we have set a new example," he said. He invoked the names of Rohana Wijeweera and those who had died in the party's cause in the course of his speech. "This is an experiment. There will be many obstacles and challenges strewn in its path. We are neither optimistic or negativist. Faith will be built through action. This is just the first rain drop in the face of a political drought. We hope to try and convert it into a shower," he said.

PA - JVP Pact, a Blow to Peace - LTTE

Sept 11 - The Liberation Tigers said on 10 September that the formation of a probationary government with an alliance between the People's Alliance (PA) regime and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) effected a serious blow to the peace process in Sri Lanka. Commenting on the current political developments in Colombo, Mr. Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's chief negotiator and political advisor told the London-based Tamil Guardian newspaper that one of the clauses of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' reached between the PA and the JVP strictly forbids any discussions on proposals relating to the solution to the Tamil national question.

Asked about the recent statements made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar claiming that the PA-JVP agreement would not affect the peace talks with the LTTE, Mr. Balasingham dismissed such claims as 'utter nonsense'.

"Clause 20 of the MOU clearly states that proposals for devolution of power and any other proposals in relations to a political solution to the Tamil national question should not be taken up for discussion during the probationary period of one year. Is there any meaning and purpose in entering into a peace process if we cannot discuss any proposals for a negotiated settlement?" Mr. Balasingham asked.

"The truth is that the PA-JVP agreement has made the peace talks an impossible task. The utterances made by the President and by the Foreign Minister Mr. Kadirgamar are simply propaganda stuff intended for the consumption of the international governments who are disillusioned with the unholy matrimony between a corrupt, weak government and the orthodox Marxist diehards who are opposed to peace and international facilitation," he said. "Neither the PA nor the JVP have a coherent vision with regard to a permanent solution to the ethnic conflict and the civil war that has torn the country apart. Operating with mutually contradictory ideologies the new partners of this probationary administration have articulated conflicting views on the Tamil question. While PA professes vague notions of 'devolution' the JVP entertains a utopian ideal of 'equality for all'. But neither of them is prepared to discuss the core demands of the Tamil people that underlie the Tamil national question," Mr. Balasingham said.

"We have repeatedly stated that it is the Tamil people who have to ultimately decide their own political status and destiny, not the Sinhala political parties who assume power in Colombo. If there is no Sinhala consensus on the core demands of the Tamils as enunciated at Thimpu talks the Tamil people will be left with no choice other than to seek their own path to liberation," Mr. Balasingham explained.

Mr. Balasingham further said that the Kumaratunga government is eager to initiate the peace talks as a desperate effort to overcome the current politico-economic crisis but not with the sincere intention of resolving the ethnic conflict through negotiated political settlement. "In its desperation the government seems to be contemplating declaring a unilateral cease-fire. Such measures will not be viewed as an act of good faith but rather as a ruse to implicate the LTTE with the ultimate motive of demonising it as the villain of peace."

"If the government is sincere and serious about engaging the LTTE in a process of negotiations, it should take measures to annul Clause 20 of the PA-JVP agreement and create conditions of normalcy in the Tamil homeland for a specific period by totally lifting the economic embargo. As we have already stated, the government should also recognise the LTTE as the authentic representatives of the people of Tamil Eelam by de-proscribing our liberation movement," Mr. Balasingham said.

UNP to Oppose Constitutional Amendment

Sept 19 - The Sri Lanka's main opposition United National Party said that it would not support the 17th amendment to constitution drafted jointly by the ruling People's Alliance and Marxist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna. "Several vital clauses included in the draft 17th amendment prepared by the UNP led joint opposition including the JVP earlier have not been incorporated in the present draft bill.Therefore my party is not in a position to support the PA-JVP sponsored draft bill," said Mr.Karu Jayasuriya, Deputy Leader of the UNP and Colombo district parliamentarian.

The draft bill prepared by the joint opposition led by UNP included provision for eight member-constitutional council. "It included the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and five eminent neutral personalities who are acceptable to all sections in politics. The present draft billed jointly prepared by PA-JVP has empowered the executive President to nominate members to the constitutional council. This would certainly tamper the independence of the council," said Mr.Karu Jayasuriya.

However he said that representatives of JVP and UNP are scheduled to hold special discussions regarding the 17th amendment draft bill in a bid to solve differences arisen over the composition of the constitutional council and to ensure two third majority in parliament.

The 17th amendment would come into force if it passed in parliament with a two-third majority. The support of the UNP is needed to obtain two-third majority, political sources said.

Meanwhile Minister Richard Pathirana said that the 17th amendment draft bill have already been submitted to the Supreme Court for its determination whether the bill is consistent to the constitution or not. Mr.Richard Pathirana said the draft 17th amendment would be tabled in parliament on September 24 as an urgent bill. The government expects the determination of the Supreme Court before 22 September.

The Arrogance of Power

Sept 2 - A new publication by University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) - Written by Dr. Rajan Hoole, a co-author of The Broken Palmyra, the focus of which was inwards - within Tamil society - the present volume examines primarily the Sri Lankan State. Sri Lanka: The Arrogance of Power - Myths, Decadence and Murder is the story of how the State, its ideology and inherent violence spawned the LTTE as its mirror image, a violently obsc-urantist JVP within Sinhalese society itself, and continues to suffocate in that legacy.

The book traces the connections between major events in post-independence Sri Lanka. It elucidates crucial aspects of the 1977 violence that have been papered over. The central sections deal with the July 1983 race riots and the Welikade prison

(continued on next page)

NEWS TRACK

Why the PA-UNP Deal Failed: Aug 29 - The opposition United National Party's insistence that the powers of the Executive President be transferred to its leader Ranil Wickremasinghe who should become the Prime Minister, led to the collapse of the talks between the ruling Peoples' Alliance (PA) and the UNP to form a National Government in Sri Lanka.

Giving details of the talks, a statement from the PA said that while the UNP proposed that all Presidential powers be exercised in "conjuction with" or "together with" the Prime Minister. The PA had said that the President was ready to function only in "consultation" with the Prime Minister. The PA further pointed out that the UNP's demand for a drastic reduction of the powers of the Executive Presidency required a constitutional amendment with a two thirds majority, and also a referendum, because the change sought was fundamental.

The PA's spokesman Mr.Mangala Samaraweera told the press in Colombo that the government would now negotiate with the Maoist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) to get the required numbers in parliament to defeat the no-confidence motion which is to come up after September 7.The talks with the JVP so far had been more fruitful, Mr.Samaraweera said.

Government to offer truce to the LTTE: Aug 29 -. The government announced that it was ready to offer a truce to the LTTE and invite the Tamil Tigers for peace talks. Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said in a statement today that the government has decided to revive a Norwegian initiative to hold peace talks with the LTTE and that the State would invite the LTTE for a face to face discussion.

The Minister's comments followed in the wake of failed joint discussions between the government and the main opposition United National Party, to reach a compromise on a government of national reconciliation.

Both the UNP and the ruling Peoples Alliance have however decided to not include the conflict in the evolving political crisis. Norway failed to bring the two warring parties, namely, the government and the LTTE to the negotiating table after having begun a peace process two years ago. The process staggered and reached a lull when renewed fighting broke out between the two factions early this year.

The Tigers have insisted that a ban by the Lankan government in 1998, proscribing the rebels be lifted before talks can be con- ducted between the rebel group and the Sri Lankan Government.

Truce Offer, a calculated ploy: Aug 30 - The LTTE rejected the Sri Lankan government's offer of a "mutually agreed ceasefire" as "a calculated political duplicity to divert the attention of the people and the world from the deepening crisis in Colombo," Mr. Anton Balasingham, the chief negotiator and political advisor of the LTTE told the press. He added that "Peace talks are not a crisis management exercise to be invoked at the pleasure of a government which is on the verge of collapse" and that "the LTTE is not prepared to enter into negotiation with a corrupt, inefficient, unstable government which does not have a majority in Parliament."

"Now the Government is facing a serious crisis politically and is compelled to seek desperate measures to cling on to power. Having failed to work out an agreement with the main Opposition, the Chandrika regime is offering a new peace bid, claiming that this is a reassessment of policy," Mr. Balasingham said.

Thondaman's Contribution Hailed: Aug. 30 - Indian and Sri Lankan leaders came together to hail the contribution of late Ceylon Workers Congress leader S Thondaman today to the uplift of the Tamils of Indian origin in the island nation and strengthening of ties between the two countries. Thondaman was an indefatigable trade union leader and a champion of human dignity, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said in a message read out on his behalf at a function here to unveil the statue of the late leader to mark his 89th birth anniversary. Thondaman had cultivated active links with India to strengthen relations between India and Sri Lanka, Vajpayee said in his message, read out by Union Minister of State for Railways Digvijay Singh.

No election for two years: Sept 2 - Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunge said on 2 September that there wouldn't be any general election this year or next year. "Government officials should not think about a change of government in the near future. They must be prepared to implement all development projects already finalized in their areas," President Kumaratunge told a

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(Continued from page 5)

massacres that still form an elusive watershed in this country's political history. Both published and unpublished materials have been collated in giving an account of the JVP insurgency of 1987-90. A key chapter deals with the dirty war of the mid-1980s, where the UNP government's attempt at demographic transformation, with covert Western and Israeli assistance, plunged the crisis to a point of no return and irrevocably internationalized it.

Other chapters deal with demoralization in the security forces, political assassinations and the fascist drift among Tamils. A final chapter tackles the question of peace. Although written for the general reader wanting to probe below official and partisan obfuscation, the student of contemporary Sri Lanka will find the book compulsory reading.

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group of government officials working in the North-Central Province. The meeting was held at President's House.

Meanwhile the general secretary of the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna Mr.Tilvin Silva addressing a meeting at Borella junction said his party would not join any capitalist party in forming a government.

Referendum Cancelled: Sept 3 - Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga on 3 Septembe called off the national referendum and announced the opening of Parliament on September 6, a day earlier than scheduled, as a precursor to an agreement her ruling party will sign with the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

But the country's political worries were far from over with the opposition still threatening to bring down the government. As predicted, the economy reacted adversely to the deal with the socialist JVP with the Colombo stock exchange's main All Share Index falling 9 points to 398 and the blue chip Milanka index crumbled to 593, down 26 points.

Parliament Reconvened: Sept 6 - Sri Lanka's Parliament, which was prorogued by President Chandrika Kumaratunge on 10 July commenced its sittings on 6 September. The Secretary General of Parliament, Dhammika Kitulugoda read out the proclamation reconvening the parliament. Thereafter the Speaker Anura Bandaranaike informed the House that the ruling People's Alliance and Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) have formed a coalition to end the political instability in the country.

The Speaker congratulated the JVP for extending its co-operation to the government, without demanding any position in the administration to resolve the political crisis.

The Speaker refused to entertain a point of order raised by United National Party parliamentarian Mahinda Samarasinghe regarding the prorogation of parliament. Mr.Mahinda Samarasinghe said in his point of order that parliament was prorogued without informing the Speaker. The Speaker replied that in future he would not give an opportunity to raise any question on this matter.

War takes its toll on children: Sept 6 - Nearly a quarter of Sri Lanka's children living in conflict areas have lost a parent in the years of fighting be-tween government soldiers and Tamil Tigers and child rights activists say the country is hardly equipped to cope with the increasing number of children traumatised by the war. According to statistics by the ministry of ethnic affairs nearly 25 percent of children have lost either both or one of their parents due to the fighting but not all of them would have been killed as the figure even includes displaced persons.

Indian Grants Lanka $100m Credit: - Sept 6 – The Indian government has granted Sri Lanka a credit line of 100 million U.S. dollars which will be disbursed over a period of three years and allow the import of a large range of goods and services from India, according to the Bank of Ceylon. Food items such as sugar, wheat flour, rice, lentils and wheat grain are among the items that can be imported under the credit line. A wide range of consumer durables could also be imported under the scheme. The repayment period for these items is between one and three years with a reasonable grace period.

ICRC Office Attacked: Sept 6 - The sub office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Muttur town, south of Trincomalee was attacked with grenades by unidentified persons early morning on 6 September. The office building was damaged in the attack. An ICRC's vehicle parked in the premises was also damaged in the explosion, police sources said. The ICR''s sub office is situated in the heart of Muttur town, which is in the control of the Sri Lanka Army.

Police recovered an unexploded grenade from the scene. The Police and the Sri Lanka Army are conducting investigations into this incident, sources said. The activities of the ICRC in Muttur area have been suspended until further notice.

The office has been closed down with immediate effect and the entire staff about 14 members working there has been asked to report to the office of the ICRC office in Trincomalee town, ICRC sources said. Last year also on October 2 the Muttur sub office of the ICRC came under attack by a group of unidentified persons. The office was stoned during that attack. Three grenades were lobbed on the ICRC office this time, police sources said.

Ships with Sri Lankans seized in Yemen: Sept 7 - Security and port officials in Yemen said that a ship seized by the authorities after entering Aden illegally had tried to escape during the previous night with more than 50 Sri Lankan men aboard, but was stopped. The vessel was one of two ships, seized more than a week ago, which had slipped into Aden to take on food and water with a total of more than 100 Sri Lankans on board.

JVP Leader in Exile to Return: Sept 7 - Self-appointed de-facto leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Somawansa Amerasinghe may return to Sri Lanka as his party now sharing power with the Poeples' Alliance(PA), political sources say. Mr. Amerasinghe, the only survivor of the party's 1989 central committee, is now in self-imposed exile in France. JVP leader Tilvin Silva was seen embarrassed when questioned by a journalist, "Will Mr.Amerasinghe come back as JVP now secured democracy in Sri Lanka" in a recent press conference held after the formation of the PA-JVP probational government. Party's parliamentary group leader Wimal Weerawansa was quick to take the microphone to announce that the central committee will discuss the matter in a due course.

Norwegian peace bid to continue: Sept 8 - Assuring that the Government's agreement with the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) would not effect the peace process, President Chandrika Kumaratunga said the Norwegian facilitated peace process to resolve the ethnic conflict would continue.

Her assertion comes despite reports that the JVP was against the Government bringing any devolution of power proposals or talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during the next one year. She said in an interview that the talks with the LTTE were in no way affected by the PA- JVP agreement, she added.

Luxury cars for SU and JVP MPs: Sept 8 - Janatha Vimukthi Peramunas (JVP) ten members of the parliament (MP) have ordered luxury cars worth of Rs. Twenty eight (28) million, in contrast to their continuing pledges that the party is against MPs being given luxury cars on public funds. The JVP have gone on record saying that they would never buy anything more than the Indian Maruthi, which is only Rs..five hundred thousand (500,000). But the JVP MPs each have ordered Toyota Double Cabs worth Rs. 2.8 million, Ravaya Sinhala weekly reported. The newly appointed Sihala Urumaya MP Champika Ranawaka also or- dered Toyota Land Cruiser worth Rs. 7.2 million. According to Ravaya, all 71 new MPs have ordered brand new cars despite Sri Lankas current economic crisis.

April Anti-LTTE operation a mistake: Sept 9 - The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, has said that a military operation, launched against the LTTE in April, was a mistake which had caused a set- back to the Norwegian-facilitated process for peace talks. "On April 24, there was a military operation near Pallai. That I think was very regrettable. Further time was lost and there was a setback," Mr. Kadirgamar said in an interview to the state-run TV channel, 'Rupavahini' on 8 September.The Foreign Minister also admitted, for the first time, to the Sri Lankan government's displeasure with Mr. Erik Solheim, Norway's chief facilitator for the peace process till four months back.

Lankans Arrested on Russo-Kazakh Border: Sept 11 - Russian borderguards have arrested thirty-seven Sri Lanka migrants, who attempted to cross over illegally from Kazakhstan into Russia near the city of Omsk. It is learned from the Siberian Customs Office's press service that they were hiding in specially-made boxes within the trailor of a KamAZ truck, which was stopped for inspection. The freight specifications were in perfect order, but customs officials de- cided to check thoroughly all the vehicle. They found thirty men, five women and two school-age children withim some 2x2-metre boxes camouflaged on top by green sweet pepper. The driver, a Kazakh citizen, and his passengers were arrested. The investigation showed that the passengers came from Sri Lanka. They paid to the driver for the pepper "camouflage" on condition that he would take them to Moscow, where he would be paid one thousand U.S. dollars for transportation. They were planning to proceed from the Russian capital to one of the West European countries, where they hoped to find jobs. The border violators were being interrogated by border guards, migration officials, and officers of the federal security service.

More Evidence in hospital grave: Sept 12 - Construction workers digging in the premises of the Jaffna hospital came upon more human bones and a red colour saree sources in the northern town said. The skeletal remains were found a few feet below the surface in the rear section of the Jaffna hospital that was occupied the Sri Lanka army until two months ago. Neither Police nor judicial officials in Jaffna town have visited the site so far despite being informed of the discovery of the human skulls, bones and saree, hospital sources said. Hospital authorities informed the SLA and the Police about the discovery of the bones Monday. Sources said that army officers had visited the hospital and held discussions with senior hospital officials. Hospital officials are refusing to give details about the discovery on 10 September of the human skeletal remains to local journalists who went there to investigate the matter, press sources in Jaffna said.

Britain eases travel ban: Sept 12 - Britain has eased a travel ban on Sri Lanka imposed after a high-profile rebel attack on the country's sole international airport more than six weeks ago. The latest travel advisory says "most visits" to Sri Lanka are trouble- free. "But visitors should be aware of the high level of terrorist activity, including the recent attack on the international airport and air force base on July 24." Although no passengers were injured in the attack by the LTTE it dealt a near-death blow to the country's tourism industry with pictures of burnt-out aircraft and stories of tourists scrambling for safety.

Tigers counter attack: Sept 12 - A Sri Lanka army soldier was killed and another was seriously wounded when a group of Liberation Tigers counter attacked a SLA ambush party at Adampan junction, eight kilometres south east of Mannar, Wednesday morning. A firefight erupted as the LTTE group walked into an ambush by three teams from the nearby SLA camp in Maanthai around 9 a.m. sources said. The Tigers had then taken up position to counter attack the SLA ambush teams, killing one and seriously injuring another.

The Liberation Tigers often cross the Adampan junction, although the SLA claims that the area is under its control. The military says that the Tigers and their supporters smuggle goods that are banned under Colombo's harsh economic embargo on the Vanni through points on the Main Supply Route to Mannar (the western sector of the A14 highway) such as the Adampan junction. The SLA and the Special Task Force deployed along the MSR to Mannar seek to control the smuggling and interdict logistical runs by the Tigers by setting up ambushes in suspected crossing points on the A14.

Four Ministers resign: Sept 13 - The political crisis in Sri Lanka's ruling People's Alliance (PA) government took a dramatic turn with the sudden resignation of four senior ministers. The four

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Ministers, S.B.Dissanayake, Professor G.L.Peiris, Mahinda Wijesekara and Jeyaraj Fernandopulle tendered their resignation at a time when President Chandrika Kumaratunge had almost decided to include two of them in her twenty member cabinet, the sources said.

They told President Chandrika Kumaratunge in their joint resignation letter that "the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between the ruling PA and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) is an obstacle to finding an acceptable political solution to the ethnic problem and the economic stability of the country." They pointed out to the President that "the MOU between the PA and JVP has no provision to bring peace to the country by finding a political solution to the ethnic problem."

They said that they would not accept any portfolio in the twenty-member cabinet, which is to be sworn on Friday morning. However they assured President Chandrika that "they would remain in the ruling parliamentary group and Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the major constituent of the PA."

Political analysts said that they have given this assurance to President to avoid expulsion from the government parliamentary group at this juncture. Sri Lanka's main opposition United National Party (UNP) sources said that these four former ministers would come to their side at the appropriate time soon after the passage of 17th amendment to the constitution enabling the establishment of four independent commissions for police, elections, public service and judiciary.

Eight-hour Power Cuts: Sept 14 - Sri Lanka's electricity monopoly announced it was extended nationwide power cuts to eight hours daily in a bid to save energy and prevent a total blackout. The state-run Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) said that it would enforce the power cuts in rotation to conserve water in hydro-electricity generating reservoirs which have hit rock bottom because of the failure of monsoon rains.

Germany eases travel restrictions: Sept 14 - Germany has eased a travel ban imposed on Sri Lanka after July's high-profile LTTE attack on the country's only international airport, its embassy said in Colombo. Immediately after the attack, Britain, Germany and other countries including the United States issued warnings telling their citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to Sri Lanka. An embassy spokesman said the advisory had been changed from advising against travel to Sri Lanka to saying what precautions need to be taken.

LTTE condemns attack on US: Sept. 15 - The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) denied reports in Sri Lanka's state media that the organization had distributed a message to the people of Jaffna with reference to the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. LTTE sources said that Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's London-based chief spokesman and political advisor, had in a statement condemned the Sri Lankan government for exploiting the "colossal human tragedy" to gain political advantage. He also condemned the attack as a "brutal crime."

Sri Lanka's state-owned Daily News on 15 September claimed the message, distributed in army controlled parts of Jaffna , said the attacks in the US "will be a good lesson for the Sinhala Army" and "will be a good warning to superpowers like America."

Mr. Balasingham accused pro-government paramilitaries in Jaffna of attempting to smear the LTTE. He said the government, in collusion with the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which operates alongside the Sri Lanka Army in Jaffna, was "engaged in a calculated, vicious propaganda campaign to discredit our liberation organisation and to confuse the people of Jaffna."

"It is sad to note that the Sri Lanka government and its anti-LTTE ally, the EPDP are attempting to exploit the phenomenal tragedy faced by the American people to their own political advantage," he said.

"We share the profound sorrow and anguish experienced by the families, relatives and friends of those thousands of innocent victims who perished in this carnage. This is a colossal human tragedy and we condemn this brutal crime," Mr. Balasingham said.

Four Soldiers Wounded: Sept. 15 - Four Sri Lanka army soldiers were injured when their 'Unicorn' armoured vehicle was hit by a claymore mine on 15 September around 2.45 p.m. in Eravur, 15 kilometres north of Batticaloa. Five soldiers from the Mylambaavali SLA camp, 4 kilometres south of Eravur were in the vehicle sources said. The wounded troopers were rushed to the Batticaloa hospital. The condition of two is serious, hospital sources said.

Suicide Attack on Gunboats: Sept 16 - A fierce sea battle erupted off Sri Lanka's northern coast on 16 September as a flotilla of Tamil Tiger guerrilla boats launched a suicide attack on a ship carrying more than 1,200 government troops, military officials said in Colombo. The vessel, named "The Pride of the South" was surrounded by more than 20 LTTE boats, some of them packed with explosives, about 26 miles off the northern port of Point Pedro, said military spokesman Brigadier Sanath Karunaratne. "Air force and naval units have moved in and at least two enemy boats have been blown up in heavy fighting," he said.

According to LTTE sources, two Dvora gunboats of the Sri Lanka Navy were sunk and another two heavily damaged in day long fighting off the seas of Point Pedro,. The Dvoras were protecting a Sri Lankan troop ship which was also damaged in the attack. Ten Sea Tigers, including four Black Tigers were killed along with at least fifteen Sri Lankan sailors, the sources said. Heavy fighting raged from 4.30 am till late afternoon after Sea Tiger boats engaged Sri Lankan gunboats escorting the troop convoy going from Trincomalee to KKS in Jaffna, they said. Deputy Commander of the LTTE's Naval wing Lt. Col. Irumborai Master was among those killed in the fighting, the radio added.

At least 47 Sri Lanka army soldiers aboard the troop carrier vessel bound for Jaffna were wounded and 18 sailors were reported missing in the mid sea battle.

WTC Attack, A Wakeup Call: Sept 16 - Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga said that the attack on

America was the last wakeup call for the whole world to fight terrorism and the time has come to join hands in solving the terrorism problem. She said it was not sufficient to hunt down terrorists and perpetrators of terrorism but it was also essential to understand the deep-rooted causes of the most dehumanizing phenomenon of he 21st century. Kumaratunga, who was addressing the first year commemoration of former minister and Muslim Congress founder the late M.H.M. Ashraff, said the recent attack on America caused heavy losses not only to the U.S. but also to its economy and the global economy.

Gulf Air suspends flights to Colombo: Sept 18 - Gulf Air today said it is forced to suspend all flights to Colombo as a result of massive war risk premiums that have been slapped on all inbound air travel to Sri Lanka following a devastating terrorist attack on the country's single international airport at Katunayake. The announcement from Gulf Air was made on the heels of a statement released by Emirates Airlines. Emirates has also claimed that the national carrier for the U.A.E. is no longer in a position to operate flights to Colombo as the airline cannot bear the cost of massive war risk insurance premiums on its aircraft.

Thousands in Peace March: Sept 19 - Hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans yesterday took to the streets in a public appeal for peace for this island nation torn apart by a long running civil war. Thousands of ffice and factory workers, disabled soldiers, students and teachers lined busy thoroughfares of Colombo and its suburbs demanding that the politicians of all parties work together for a peaceful solution to the ethnic problem.

The event was organised by the local business community through their umbrella movement for peace "SriLankaFirst" told the press peace is the prime and only objective of the movement. "Through today's program we are asking and forcing the politicians to work together for peace. They should do it now, or we may not have another chance". "Our intention is to show the destruction of the war and the extreme need of peace to the rest of world",an official speaking behalf of the movement said. Many other organisation, Non Governmental such as Sar-vodaya, Marga Institute and prominent personalities were also involved in yesterday's public display.

Peace March Disrupted: Sept 19 - Members belonging to the extremist Sihala Urumaya attempted to disrupt "SriLankaFirst", a massive peace campaign organised by Sri Lanka's big businesses and major NGOs near Colombo 19 September. A procession of Sihala Urumauya (SU) activists and supporters that was on its way to the US Embassy to express solidarity with the American government in the wake of the World Trade Centre attack jeered and insulted people who were holding hands in the "SriLankaFirst" peace campaign near the city hall in Colombo. One of the organisers of "SriLankaFirst" said that the Sihala Urumaya had deliberately planned its procession Wednesday to disrupt their campaign.

Supporters of Sihala Urumaya (SU) and National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT) assaulted female employees of Seylan Bank who took part in the campaign. Organisers said that Sihala Urumaya MP Champika Ranawaka was seen leading the crowd that assaulted the peace marchers "The attackers lead by Champika Ranawaka assaulted the workers. The women were pulled by the hair, and beaten in the roadside", said Mr. Lalith Kotalawala, the main organiser of the campaign.

"Champika Ranawaka should go to north east to face Prabhakaran instead of showing his bravado to innocent women," Mr. Kotalawala, chairman of the Seylan Bank told BBCs Sandeshaya. "We are also Sinhalas. We are exercising our democratic rights in campaigning to end the war."

Human Smugglers Imprisoned: Sept 19 - The captain and eight crew members of a ship which carried twenty four illegal Sri Lankan immigrants to Australia in April were sentenced to 5 ½ years and 3 ½ years in prison by a court in Perth this morning. This is the first time that a court in Australia sentenced Sri Lankans for an offence of this nature.

All four twenty four illegal immigrants had paid the organizers 10,000 Australian dollars each to take them to Australia. Sentencing the smugglers, Judge Kevin Hammond of the District Court of Western Australia said people-smuggling was a serious offence and a deterrent message had to be sent to the organisers of such operations.

Plight of Asylum Seekers: Sept 20 - Barefoot and weary, another group of asylum seekers stepped onto the tiny Pacific island republic of Nauru on 20 September after three weeks aboard an Australian navy ship. Two navy landing craft carried 119 Afghans and Sri Lankans into Nauru's harbor as hundreds of locals looked on. They followed an initial group of 100 refugees transferred from the HMAS Manoora on the previous day.

Temporary truce for anti-polio drive: Sept 20 - The Sri Lankan government and separatist Tamil guerrillas have agreed to two temporary ceasefires to allow children in the northeastern war zone to be vaccinated against polio, reports from Colombo said on 20 September. "Days of tranquili- ty" will be observed on September 19-20 in response to a request by the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF.

Stamp issued 4,545 years too late: Sept 20 - Red-faced Sri Lankan postal authorities ordered an inquiry on 20 September after a printing error left an important Buddhist commemorative stamp 4,545 years out of date, officials said. The stamp, issued this week in honour of one of the country's premier Buddhist societies, was dated 2544 BC, for "before Christ," instead of BE, for "Buddhist era," which would have signified the current year of the Buddhist cal- endar. An official of the Philatelic Bureau told Reuters an in- quiry had been launched, but said it was too late to recall the stamps from hundreds of post offices across the country.

Constitutional Amendment: Sept 20 - Opposition is growing to changes introduced to the draft of the 17th amendment to the constitution which will set up a constitutional council to make key appointments and select members to the

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proposed four independent commissions. The changes decided at talks between the PA government and the JVP is coming under growing criticism from opposition political parties and civil society groups. Civil society groups say the changes to the draft has basically undermined the independence of the institutions that are to be set up and therefore negates the very purpose of the changes. The 17th amendment is to be taken up by the supreme court on Friday to determine whether it needs just a two thirds majority in parliament or whether it also has to be approved at a referendum. The 17th amendment is to be debated in parliament on the 24th and 25th of this month. However opposition parties are expected to vote against it, unless a number of controversial clauses are withdrawn by the government and the JVP.

Funding Terrorism to become a crime: Sept 20 - The government plans to make it a criminal offence to raise funds in Canada for terrorist groups, Justice Minister Anne McLellan says. The measures McLellan is proposing go beyond legislation already before Parliament that would strip charitable status from groups that are believed to be raising money for terrorism. McLellan told reporters yesterday a series of new counter-terrorism measures could be introduced in the House of Commons as an omnibus bill. And she said the delicate balance between protection of individual rights and collective security has shifted toward security after last week's terrorist attacks. "After last Tuesday's events, one can make a compelling case that that balance has shifted," McLellan said.

TULF divided on 17 th amendment: Sept 20 - The central working committee of the Tamil United Liberation Front is scheduled to meet on 23 September to decide on whether to support the 17th amendment to the constitution when the ruling People's Alliance and Marxist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna jointly table the draft bill in parliament September 24. The rank and file of the TULF is reported to have divided on this issue, party sources said.

"The establishment of independent commissions for elections, public service, judiciary and police would not solve the national problem. Not a single political party dominated by the majority community is worried about the plight of Tamils. They are only worried about coming to power. The central committee of Tamil United National Front must take all these into consideration before taking any decision," a leader of the TULF said. He added, "We should not allow major political parties to take us for a ride."

It is reported that a section of the TULF feels that it should abstain from the debate and vote on the 17th amendment bill in parliament. Some members of central working committee insist that they should participate in the debate and must cast their vote against the 17th amendment bill.

Meanwhile hectic discussions take place Thursday evening among the leaders of all opposition political parties including Marxist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna which has signed a Memorandum Of Understanding with the ruling People's Alliance, to reach a consensus regarding the 17th amendment bill.

The Awesome Cruelty of a Doomed People

Robert Fisk

So it has come to this. The entire modern history of the Middle East the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the Balfour declaration, Lawrence of Arabia's lies, the Arab revolt, the foundation of the state of Israel, four Arab-Israeli wars and the 34 years of Israel's brutal occupation of Arab land? All erased within hours as those who claim to represent a crushed, humiliated population struck back with the wickedness and awesome cruelty of a doomed people. Is it fair is it moral, to write this so soon, without proof, without a shred of evidence, when the last act of barbarism in Oklahoma turned out to be the work of home-grown Americans? I fear it is. America is at war and, unless I am grotesquely mistaken, many thousands more are now scheduled to die in the Middle East, perhaps in America too. Some of us warned of "the explosion to come". But we never dreamed this nightmare.

And yes, Osama bin Laden comes to mind, his money, his theology, his frightening dedication to destroy American power. I have sat in front of bin Laden as he described how his men helped to destroy the Russian army in Afghanistan and thus the Soviet Union. Their boundless confidence allowed them to declare war on America. But this is not the war of democracy vs terror that the world will be asked to believe in the coming hours and days. It is also about American missiles smashing into Palestinian homes and US helicopters firing missiles into a Lebanese ambulance in 1996 and American shells crashing into a village called Qana a few days later and about a Lebanese militia, paid and uniformed by America's Israeli ally hacking and raping and murdering their way through refugee camps.

No, there is no doubting the utter, indescribable evil of what has happened in the United States. That Palestinians could celebrate the massacre of 20,000, perhaps 35,000 innocent people is not only a symbol of their despair but of their political immaturity, of their failure to grasp what they had always been accusing their Israeli enemies of doing: acting disproportionately. But we were warned. All the years of rhetoric, all the promises to strike at the heart of America, to cut off the head of "the American snake" we took for empty threats. How could a backward, conservative, undemocratic and corrupt group of regimes and small, violent organisations fulfil such preposterous promises? Now we know.

And in the hours that followed yesterday's annihilation, I began to remember those other extraordinary, unbelievable assaults upon the US and its allies, miniature now by comparison with yesterdays' casualties. Did not the suicide bombers who killed 241 American servicemen and almost 100 french paratroops in Beirut on 23 October 1983, time their attacks with unthinkable precision?

It was just 7 seconds between the Marine bombing and the destruction of the French three miles away. Then there were the attacks on US bases in Saudi Arabia, and last year's attempt almost successful it now turns out-to sink the USS Cole in Aden. And then how easy was our failure to recognise the new weapon of the Middle East which neither Americans or any other Westerners could equal: the despair-driven, desperate suicide bomber. All America's power, wealth and arrogance, the Arabs will be saying could not defend the greatest power the world has ever known from this destruction. For journalists, even those who have literally walked through the blood of the Middle East, words dry up here. Awesome, terrible, unspeakable, unforgivable; in the coming days, these words will become water in the desert. And there will be, naturally and inevitably, and quite immorally, an attempt to obscure the historical wrongs and the blood and the injustices that lie behind yesterday's firestorms. We will be told about "mindless terrorism", the "mindless" bit being essential if we are not to realise how hated America has become in the land of the birth of three great religions.

Ask an Arab how he responds to 20 or 30 thousand innocent deaths and he or she will respond as good and decent people should, that it is an unspeakable crime. But they will ask why we did not use such words about the sanctions that have destroyed the lives of perhaps half a million children in Iraq, why we did not rage about the 17,500 civilians killed in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, why we allowed one nation in the Middle East to ignore UN Security Council resolutions but bombed and sanctioned all others who did. And those basic reasons why the Middle East caught fire last September, the Israeli occupation of Arab land, the dispossession of Palestinians, the bombardments and state sponsored executions, the Israeli tortures ... all these must be obscured lest they provide the smallest fractional reason for yesterday's mass savagery. No, Israel was not to blame, that we can be sure that Saddam Hussein and the other grotesque dictators will claim so'' but the malign influence of history and our share in its burden must surely stand in the dark with the suicide bombers. Our broken promises, perhaps even our destruction of the Ottoman Empire, led inevitably to this tragedy. America has bankrolled Israel's wars for so many years that it believed this would be cost-free.

No longer so. It would be an act of extraordinary courage and wisdom if the United States was to pause for a moment and reflect upon its role in the world, the indifference of its government to the suffering of Arabs, the indolence of its current president.

But of course, the United States will want to strike back against "world terror", who can blame them? Indeed, who could ever point the finger at Americans now for using that pejorative and sometimes racist word "terrorism"? There will be those swift to condemn any suggestion that we should look for real historical reasons for an act of violence on this world-war scale. But unless we do so, then we are facing a conflict the like of which we have not seen since Hitler's death and the surrender of Japan. Korea, Vietnam, is beginning to fade away in comparison. Eight years ago, I helped to make a television series that tried to explain why so many Muslims had come to hate the West. Last night, I remembered some of those Muslims in that film, their families burnt by American-made bombs and weapons. They talked about how no one would help them but God. Theology vs technology, the suicide bomber against the nuclear power. Now we have learnt what this means. *(Courtesy: The Independent, London)*

PA-JVP Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] reached between the PA and the JVP on September 5 calls for establishment of Constitutional Council and independent commissions to run the public service, the judiciary, the elections office and the police on or before September 24th.

The MoU has called for abolition of the executive presidency and the vesting of executive power in parliament, and the formation and adoption of an electoral system that ensures reasonable representation of all ethnic groups in parliament and for holding of the general election under a neutral caretaker government.

Under the MoU, the government has agreed to write-off loans given to farmers from the Maha season of 1999/2000 to the Yala season of 2001 at rates ranging up to Rs 20,000 to each [inclusive of the full amount of Rs 20,000] for paddy and plantain cultivation in the same manner as after the 1994 general election when the PA wrote-off cultivation loans amounting to Rs 6000.

The PA has also agreed to appoint a Task Force to investigate persons or institutions who have obtained large scale loans for business purposes and thereafter neglected repayment, impose a ceiling on travelling abroad by both ministers, MPs and officials at state expense, impose a ban on the importation of luxury vehicles, ceiling on fuel allowance given to ministers and MP s, find suitable alternate buildings at less cost to the government for ministers and state institutions if they are at present housed in private buildings, not to incur any expenditure from September 5,2001 to September 4,2002 on construction work on the president's house which is now in progress, appoint and operate by or before October 5 a panel with full powers to ensure prevention of fraud and corruption in the purchases to be made by the government, particularly armaments, and restrict the number of cabinet ministers to 20 and appoint a corresponding number of deputy ministers and not to create "project ministries" or portfolios and ministerships.

Full Text

Memorandum of Understanding reached between Mr. D. M. Jayaratne, Secretary of the People's Alliance on behalf of the People's Alliance on one part and Mr. Tilvin Silva, Secretary of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna on behalf of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna on the other on this 5th Day of September, 2001 at Colombo.

The two parties stand bound by the following agreements and conditions, namely:

1. The period of validity of this Memorandum of Understanding will be only one complete year beginning on 5th September, 2001 and ending on 4th September, 2002.

2. (i) If the People's Alliance intends to take policy decisions or courses of action outside of these agreements that conflict with or have an effect contrary to them, the People's Alliance as one party to the agreement, agrees to obtain the prior concurrence of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna the other party to the agreement on all occasions they intend to take such decisions or courses of action.
(ii) The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna agrees not to launch on any course of action that tends directly to destabilise or topple the People's Alliance Government during the period of this Memorandum of Understanding or its period of proper implementation. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna agrees to extend the necessary support to the continuance of the People's Alliance Government with stability in Parliament during this period.

3. The People's Alliance should immediately cancel the Referendum that was first scheduled to be held on August 21, 2001 as announced by the President by the Government Gazette No. 1192/16 and later postponed to October 18, 2001 by Government Gazette No. 1196/18. (This Referendum has already been cancelled.)

4. The People's Alliance should reconvene on or before September 6, 2001 the Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka prorogued by direction of the President by the Government Gazette bearing No. 1192/16. (Parliament has already been reconvened)

5. The People's Alliance agrees to have passed by Parliament the proposed 17th amendment to the Constitution drafted with the full agreement of all the parties of the Opposition included in the schedule to this Memorandum providing for the creation of the following institutions, subject to essential amendments acceptable to both parties to the Memorandum of Understanding, on or before September 24, 2001:
a) Constitutional Council
b) Independent Public Service Commission
c) Independent Judicial Service Commission
d) Independent Election Commission and
e) Independent Police Commission
The Constitutional Council should be established before October 5, 2001.

6. The two parties to the Memorandum of Understanding agree to prepare legislation to establish an Independent Media Commission within six months from the date hereof.

7. The two parties to the Memorandum of Understanding agree to present to Parliament within six months from the date hereof amendments to the Constitution for abolition of the Executive Presidency and vesting executive power in Parliament and the formulation and adoption of an electoral system which ensures reasonable representation of all ethnic groups in Parliament and for holding of the General Election under a care-taker Government. This condition applies to the first General Election that will be held after this amendment to the Constitution.

8. During the period of validity of this Memorandum of Understanding:
a) steps should be taken to prevent rises of prices or cost of essential consumer commodities and services such as fuel, milk powder, sugar, flour, rice, drugs, electricity, gas, water, bus and train fares. When costs of other goods or services increase due to external reasons, the Government should intervene and take measures to control same to the maximum possible extent,
b) if there are plans to privatise public or social property such as water resources, banks, insurance ventures, the People's Alliance agrees to withhold such action during the one year period this Memorandum of Understanding remains valid, and
c) excepting monetary agreements already entered into and those to be signed in consequence of them, not to enter into trade agreements or financial agreements that could be detrimental to the interests of the country.

9. In the same manner as after the 1994 General Elections Her Excellency the President wrote-off cultivation loans amounting to Rs. 6000 million given to farmers and repayment of which had gone into arrears the People's Alliance Government will take action before September 30, 2001 to write-off loans given to farmers from the Maha season of 1999/2000 to the Yala season of 2001 at rates ranging up to Rs. 20,000/- to each (inclusive of the full amount of Rs. 20,000/-) for paddy and plantain cultivation. Further, the People's Alliance Government will take action to properly look into the position of other loans different in category and amount to these loans and afford any possible relief to the farmers in respect of them.

10. The People's Alliance agrees to appoint a Task Force with full authority to investigate persons or institutions who had obtained large scale loans for business purposes and thereafter neglected repayment of such loans, and the reasons for such neglect and to recover such outstanding monies in terms of the recommendations of the Task Force within three months of entering into this Memorandum of Understanding.

11. The People's Alliance agrees to appoint a Select Committee representing all Political Parties represented in Parliament with a view to finding short term solutions to problems faced by local industrialists and businessmen and to take action within three months of entering into this Memorandum of Understanding to rehabilitate such ventures taking into consideration recommendations of such Select

Committee, made after a wide consultation of the views of relevant parties.

12. The two parties agree to appoint Committees of persons with specialist knowledge and experience in respect of the subjects of all Ministries on a basis of consensus, before the lapse of two months from the date of entering into this Memorandum of Understanding.

13. The People's Alliance agrees to remitting voluntarily by the President, Members of the Cabinet of Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Members of Parliament to the Consolidated Fund half their salary during the whole period of validity of this Memorandum of Understanding and to make available monthly to both parties to the Memorandum of Understanding reports on such remittances through the Ministry of Finance.

14. The two parties agree to embark upon the following measures, namely:
(a) To impose a ceiling on travelling abroad of both Ministers and Members of Parliament and Officials at state expense as has already been done.
(b) To impose a ban on the importation of luxury vehicles for Ministers and higher officials (The People's Alliance emphatically states that this practice is already in operation in relation to both Ministers and officials).
(c) To impose a ceiling on the fuel allowance currently given to Ministers and Members of Parliament and higher officials as is the practice already adopted.
(d) To find suitable alternate buildings at lesser cost to the Government for the Ministries and State Institutions, if they are presently housed in buildings on payment of high rentals by the Government inspite of the availability of buildings at cheaper rates with adequate facilities.
(e) Not to incur any expenditure, during the one year period the Memorandum of Understanding is in force, on construction work on the President's House which is now in progress.
Both parties also agree to appoint a panel comprising representatives of both parties to ensure conformity with the aforesaid matters.

15. The People's Alliance agrees to restrict the number of Cabinet Ministers to 20 and appoint a corresponding number of Deputy Ministers and not to create "Project Ministries" or portfolios to be otherwise designated other than the portfolios and Ministerships that are mentioned herein, during the one year period the Memorandum of Understanding is in force.
The People's Alliance agrees to carry out the above mentioned changes to be effected in the portfolios and the Deputy Ministerships within one week after this Memorandum of Understanding is signed i.e., on or before 12th day of September 2001.

16. The People's Alliance agrees to appoint and operationalize within one month after this Memorandum of Understanding is signed, a panel with full powers to ensure prevention of fraud and corruption in the purchases to be made by the Government including armaments, aircraft etc.

17. The People's Alliance also agrees to appoint a Committee comprising representatives of leading Trade Unions to look into the matters relating to the ILO conventions that have already been ratified but are no longer in force in Sri Lanka and submit recommendations for the preparation of draft legislation on such conventions and also look into matters relating to the Labour Laws that are already in force in Sri Lanka but are not being effectively imposed and make recommendations relating thereto. It is agreed by the People's Alliance to frame legislation on the recommendations of this Committee and place such legislation on the statute book during the one year period this Memorandum of Understanding is in force.

18. The People's Alliance agrees to adhere to a policy of transparency during the period this Memorandum of Understanding is in force to ensure that all appointments, promotions and transfers by the Government are effected without any discrimination with regard to nationality, religion, sex, party politics etc.

19. The People's Alliance agrees to initiate speedy measures to take into custody all illegal firearms that are in the possession of individuals and underworld gangs and thereby ensure the prevention of crimes.

20. The People's Alliance agrees not to bring in during the one year this Memorandum of Understanding is in force, proposals for devolution of power or any other proposals that may lead to a controversy until such time that a broad consensus is arrived at through a wide-ranging dialogue with the participation of all segments of society aimed at reaching a reasonable resolution of the national question.

21. The People's Alliance agrees to appoint a Task Force with full powers that could intervene in the matter of amelioration of the living conditions of the people belonging to all communities:
Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim who were reduced to destitution and are undergoing untold hardship due to the on-going war and to ensure the up-liftment of their social lives. It is also agreed by the People's Alliance to enhance the quantum of relief allowance currently being granted.

22. During the period of this Memorandum of Understanding is in force, the People's Alliance agrees -
(a) To suspend all plans drawn up for the privatization of education (The People's Alliance emphatically states that there are no such proposals under contemplation).
(b) Not to grant permission for the establishment of private universities (The People's Alliance emphatically states that this is already the accepted policy).
(c) To appoint a panel comprising academics, including University lecturers, to make such recommendations as are deemed necessary to expand the national university system and ensure its qualitative development.

23. The People's Alliance agrees to dissolve Parliament on completion of the one year period after this Memorandum of Understanding is signed and conduct a free and fair election under the new electoral system and the care-taker Government that is to be set up in terms of this Memorandum of Understanding.

24. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna further agrees to the following lines of action.
(a) The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna agrees to extend necessary support to the People's Alliance in Parliament on all occasions to sustain a stable government during the one year period.
(b) The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna agrees to contribute to the political stability which is so necessary to ensure the economic stability of the country.
(c) The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna agrees not to support any subversive line of action to be adopted by other parties that may result in paralyzing the government and the economy.
(The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna emphasizes that they have already adopted this stance)

25. It is obligatory on the part of both parties to carry out severally and collectively the aforesaid agreements within the agreed time frames. In the event of either of the parties not taking steps to carry out any of the several items agreed to, within the specified time frames, and if it is also not found possible for one party to negotiate and arrive at an agreement by prior notice in writing being given to the other party, both parties agree that either party shall have the right to withdraw from this Memorandum of understanding.

26. Both parties agree to appoint a supervisory panel comprising Chief Buddhist Monks, other Religious Dignitaries, Trade Union representatives, representatives of the Business Community and representatives of professionals, artistes and media personnel to monitor the performance of the aforesaid agreements and develop modalities for the supervisory mechanism above-referred to.

27. If any dispute arises with regard to the interpretation of any clause or wordings of the agreement, both parties shall have discussions among themselves with regard to the interpretation thereof and arrive at a final decision by consensus.

28. Both parties agree that any clause or clauses of this Memorandum of Understanding may be amended or fresh clauses incorporated by mutual agreement if it is deemed necessary to do so.

Done in Colombo on this fifth day of September 2001.

D. M. Jayaratne, Secretary/People's Alliance
Tilvin Silva, Secretary/Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna

Topics in Focus

• PA-JVP Agreement
• Reacting to Terrorism

Jehan Perera

PA - JVP Agreement

The most important contribution of the government-JVP agreement is its restoration of the democratic process in the country, at least to those parts under government-control. Earlier, the 2 month suspension of Parliament by the President to block the no-confidence motion against the government by the joint opposition threatened to take the country on the dangerous path of extra-constitutional action. By providing the government with parliamentary support to avoid defeat, the JVP has enabled the government to once again work through Parliament. On the face of it, the government-JVP agreement is a magnificent example of both political sacrifice and personal reconciliation in the national interest. It highlights the potential in the Sri Lankan polity to accommodate political foes, even mortal foes, who had in the not-so-distant past sought to either physically or politically exterminate each other. To those sceptical about the prospects for a government-LTTE agreement someday in the future, the example of the government-JVP agreement would be an unexpected clarion call to think again.

Not even three months ago, the government was organising commemoration events throughout the country to remind the people of the period of JVP terror in 1988-89, when the smallest boy with a handwritten note could shut down entire neighborhoods, so great was the public fear of defying a JVP curfew. The JVP was equally critical of the PA government, and described it as an opportunistic and corrupt government.

But there seemed to be another searing wound that would keep the two parties forever apart. This was the brutal assassination of President Kumaratunga's husband in front of her family house. At the time of the assassination of Vijaya Kumaranatunga, his wife blamed the JVP for the assassination as indeed did the hundreds of thousands of mourners who thronged for his funeral. Even today, most people would believe the same, despite the findings of a Presidential Commission of Inquiry headed by the present Chief Justice that the then UNP government was indirectly responsible. The ability of President Kumaratunga to put such a horrific memory behind her in negotiating an agreement with the JVP speaks of her grim determination in putting aside the past for the greater good. The question to be answered over the course of the next few weeks is, whose greater good, the country's or the ruling party's.

The ability of the President to apparently transcend her personal feelings is especially noteworthy as the JVP has not publicly repented in the slightest for the terror it engaged in the past. At the signing of the PA-JVP agreement, they remembered and praised their late leader Rohana Wijeweera and other leaders no longer living under whose dispensation the two bloody JVP insurrections of 1971 and 1988-89 took place. Those who rightly condemn the state terror practised by the then UNP government in suppressing the JVP insurrection also need to condemn the guerilla terror of the JVP. It led to over a hundred innocent CTB bus drivers being shot dead, in addition to thousands of other innocents and political activists.

Crucial Question

The new administration that has been set up following signing of the memorandum of understanding between the PA and JVP gives the country a measure of hope in a stable government. Some of the key elements in the agreement focus on establishing the frameworks for good governance in the form of independent commissions, abolition of the executive presidency and a caretaker government to conduct elections. The support of the other political parties in Parliament is likely to be forthcoming in this regard and would ensure their rapid implementation if that is the real purpose of the agreement. The crucial question, however, is with regard to the sincerity and motivation of the parties to the agreement. It is in the common interest of all sections of the people that the reforms for good governance should take place without hindrance and prior to the next series of elections. In the next few weeks it will be seen whether the PA and JVP are actually proceeding with the parliamentary passage of the independent commissions for public service, elections, police and judiciary in terms of the 17th amendment and also the media commission. If they are, then it is in the national interest that the UNP should cease its efforts to engineer a crossover of disgruntled PA parliamentarians and thereby bring down the government.

On the other hand, there is a concern that the PA-JVP agreement will be terminated soon after October 10 is passed. This is because after October 10 it is constitutionally possible for President Kumaratunga to use her presidential powers and dissolve Parliament. If so, it would be clear that the PA-JVP agreement was not a genuine one but was a mere ploy to score an advantage over the UNP which is the main rival of both the PA and JVP in the quest for power.

There are two possible self-seeking advantages of the PA-JVP agreement. First, it would enable the government to get past the date of October 10 in a democratic and dignified manner without having to prorogue Parliament yet again and risk popular disgust. Second, it would enable the JVP to score points with the electorate by virtue of the populist elements of the agreement that it insisted upon. These include measures that the war-weakened economy will certainly not be able to sustain in the longer term, such as ensuring the forgiving of farmers' loans, price controls on essential commodities and a halt to IMF-required structural adjustments.

Breathing Space

There is also a second crucial question concerning the workability of the PA-JVP agreement. This is whether the forces in opposition will be prepared to give the new government the breathing space to put the frameworks for good governance into place. Political parties such as the UNP are machines meant to capture political power. The LTTE is a politico-military machine meant to establish exclusive Tamil power in a part of the country. From the point of view of their own quests for power, it might seem to be in the interests of the UNP and LTTE to deal the new government deadly blows as soon as possible.

The UNP could seek to destabilise or even topple the government by engineering defections from the ranks of disgruntled PA parliamentarians. The LTTE could seek to achieve the same purpose by striking at either economic or military targets. The absence of reference to peace talks with the LTTE is a noticeable lacuna in the PA-JVP agreement despite going into great detail on many other far less important issues, such as the presidential palace and import of luxury cars. The agreement further states that the government will not make any proposals for devolution without first getting a consensus in society concerning them.

Therefore the PA-JVP agreement offers very little directly to the peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict. The LTTE may feel it has no interest in either tacitly supporting or giving breathing space for such an agreement. But if the interests of the people are foremost, then creating the proper countrywide frameworks for good governance contained in the 17th amendment and other proposed legislation should be permitted to go ahead within the 3-6 month time frames that the PA-JVP agreement specifies. All parties, including those representing the ethnic minorities in Parliament, are agreed on these good governance measures in principle.

Ultimately, societies that have achieved the greater measure of peace, justice and prosperity are those that have relied on good laws, and not on exceptional individuals or armed revolutions. Good laws and transparent governance are as much necessary for the people living in the government-controlled areas as in the LTTE-controlled areas. The stories of corruption now emerging from LTTE-controlled areas are evidence for this. They are told by people who appreciate what the LTTE has tried to vindicate by way of Tamil rights in Sri Lanka, but who are concerned about the direction their society is taking. It has been reported for some time that LTTE police are lax in controlling crimes committed by those with LTTE connections. While the LTTE leadership is said to be aware of this problem, it does not or cannot put a halt to it offering a grim foreboding of what is to come if society continues on its present path. Recently it was reported that a medical doctor practising in the Wanni was executed after trial by the LTTE for having run a brothel in his medical clinic. The shocking severity of this punishment (as practised in China for those who indulge in social vices) was probably because it disturbed the LTTE hierarchy that such vices existed in their society. But this was not an isolated incident.

It is only democracy, laws ensuring good governance and a peace settlement that will take Sri Lanka towards a society of human rights, balance and justice in which people can look forward to a better economic future. The government should be given a breathing space to demonstrate its sincerity in working to establish the frameworks for good governance that would provide the basis for democracy and conflict resolution in the future.

Reacting to Terrorist Attacks

Even as they unfolded the terrible events in the United States came straight into Sri Lakan homes through the instant reach of television. It did not matter that the attacks had taken place half way round the globe more than ten thousand miles away.

For most human beings empathy with the suffering of others comes before the making of political judgments. It is likely that the vast majority of Sri Lankans felt anguish at the human suffering and immense destruction they were witnessing. They could perhaps identify with the horror better than most other peoples across the globe. They had seen two of their own tallest buildings gutted by fire and collapsing five years ago in similar circumstances, during the suicide bombing of the Central Bank by an explosives-laden truck.

But there were also those who did make political judgments as they watched the scenes of destruction in New York and Washington, DC. They saw not only the burning buildings and loss of life, they also saw different lessons in it. Some saw the lesson to a government of a country that has urged the Sri Lankan government to negotiate with an organisation that had committed similar terrorist attacks against civilian targets.

Others saw a lesson to a government that had banned the organisation fighting for their rights as being terrorist and delegitimising their struggle. And still others saw a lesson to the government of a country that tacitly supported terrorist measures by allied governments against civilian populations elsewhere in the world.

Revenge and Retribution?

Whatever the political judgments may be, the terrorist attack that brought down the World Trade Centre in New York and a part of the Pentagon in Washington DC was both unexpected and reprehensible. Hardly anyone would be evil enough to imagine that a planeload of civilians would be used as a weapon to destroy buildings full of civilians. What cannot be imagined cannot be protected against. It is also next to impossible to be constantly on guard against those who are prepared to die to achieve their objectives, as the Sri Lankan military have found time and again. The question is how can this evil be eradicated or at least contained.

The most principled, and facile, answer would be that situations that provide a breeding ground for terrorism should not be permitted to arise. The grievances of people should be nipped in the bud and not be allowed to fester. But in too many situations, as in Sri Lanka, such timely action is not taken. There is an absence of foresight and wisdom as late President J.R. Jayewardene once confessed of himself in relation to the country's ethnic conflict.

The United States is the greatest military and economic power in the world today. How it responds to the injury to itself will determine the course of the world in the days and years to come. It appears that the dominant voice emanating from the United States at this time is a call for revenge and retribution. That is natural, and represents the emotional and reactive side of human beings. But it must not be allowed to prevail, for if it does the world will become a more evil place for all of humanity.

When LTTE suicide bombers attacked Sri Lanka's only international airport two months ago, and destroyed half of its airbus fleet, it destroyed the equivalent of 10 percent of the country's annual income. Further, with Western countries issuing travel advisories that the entire country was akin to a war zone, the country's tourist and export-based industries fell to their knees and made tens of thousands unemployed.

At this time of trial, the US ambassador in Sri Lanka, Ashley Wills, urged the Sri Lankan government to negotiate with the LTTE. He probably knew that this was not what the emotional and reactive side of those who were at the receiving end of that attack wanted to hear. But as a friend

of the country, he probably also saw that a Sri Lankan military response at that time, or in the future, would only serve to increase the reservoir of hate on the other side of the divide. It would harden the sentiment of those who volunteered for suicide missions.

By contrast, when the United States itself has been savagely hit, the sentiment seems to be different. There is no talk of negotiations, if not with the terrorists who committed the crime, with those representing the larger political movements they espouse. Some leading American commentators, such as Lance Morrow writing in Time magazine's prestigious Essay column have extolled the virtues of rage and retribution. Those who disagree, he has said, are too philosophical for decent company. But though it may be hard to accept at a time like this, the eternal wisdom is that hatred does not cease by hatred, but by love alone (Dhammapada).

Increasing Hate

Organisations that harness suicide bombers to do their work require the reservoir of hate. The usage of military means to resolve problems is the surest way of increasing the reservoir of hate. Drying up the reservoir of hatred require the adoption of non-violent and non-military means of conflict resolution. Most often the use of military means is clumsy and results in civilians suffering the most. This increases the reservoir of hatred from which new suicide bombers may be recruited.

On this basis the mobilising of its mighty aircraft carriers, arsenals of cruise missiles and millions of soldiers for war by the United States as the way to combat terrorism is likely to increase the reservoirs of hatred in the world from which suicide bombers are recruited. Bombing countries that can hardly govern themselves is not likely to yield positive results. As the British commentator Robert Harris has written, every ton of bombs dropped on the fundamentalists' bases and on the people of the states that harbour them, is likely to create more martyrs, more fanatics and more terrorist atrocities.

It is true that most militant organisations outgrow the original (political) causes that justified their creation. After a point of time, they become organisations whose end is primarily their own survival and the expression of their own hate. They outgrow the cause of the people they originally set out to vindicate. Therefore, it might seem that a military response to them is appropriate and, indeed, the only way to stop them. But the dilemma is that any effort at violent conflict resolution is likely to spill over to the civilian population, and thereby re-ignite the original grievances. Therein is the trap of violence.

In taking action against the suspected terrorist leader Osama Bin-Laden, the United States needs also to bear in mind that it was they who once nurtured and sustained him during its cold war against the Soviet Union. They created the monster, even as India once gave training and sustenance to the Tamil militant movement in Sri Lanka, and to the LTTE which killed its own soldiers and assassinated its former prime minister. It is ironic that the creations of these big powers should finally turn against them. The injustice of causing so-called collateral damage to civilians in attempting to defeat their own creations needs to be borne in mind. The full compensation of these civilians should be uppermost in any military campaign carried out against the terrorist organisation. That could to some degree reduce the reservoir of hate that would stem from the envisaged US-led military action in Afghanistan and other countries suspected of harbouring terrorists.

Priority to Political Means

The United States needs also to draw on the experience of countries like Sri Lanka which have endured years of terrorism and counter-terrorism and have found what works and what does not work. After nearly 18 years of fighting against the LTTE giving primacy to military means, both the ruling People's Alliance and opposition UNP have realised the lack of positive results flowing from this course of military action. With the business community becoming the latest entrant into the peace movement, the main political parties are now endeavoring to give priority to political means of ending the conflict. The international community, led by the United States, needs to assist in this process in making a success out of Sri Lanka's peace efforts. A success even in a little country like Sri Lanka, distant though it is from the United States, can offer the world the hope that terrorist violence can be ended peacefully.

But governments of most countries are extremely self-centred, and the United States is no exception. They may steeply tax their own citizens to ensure equity within their own countries, but they give only a pittance of it to those who are at the borders of survival outside their countries. In a similar manner Western countries are very concerned about protecting civil liberties in their own countries, such as the right of their citizens to form associations and to collect money for various causes. This is the reason they give when asked why they do not clamp down on the collection of funds for terrorist activities. They do not seem to care very much if the civil liberties they protect within their own countries leads to the fostering of terrorism in other countries.

Already, the governments of most countries are heavily dependent on the concessionary financial flows from international financial institutions, and can be pressurised to adapt their policies in the direction of conflict resolving practices. Perhaps the terrorist strikes against the United States will now make the international community view with a more critical eye the international funding of organisations that use violence to achieve political objectives. That would be the way to reduce the reservoir of funds that, together with the reservoir of hate, sustains terrorism in the world.

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Govt. to Survive With JVP Support

By our Colombo Correspondent

The intensity of struggle for supremacy in parliament would appear to have lessened with the JVP making a move to sustain the PA government for one year. The Government that lost its majority on June 20 with the defection of seven Sri Lanka Muslim Congress lawmakers regained it on September 5 by signing a pact with the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) which has 10 members in the 225- member Parliament. The alliance with the JVP raised the Government's strength to 119.

Even as it secured its majority in parliament with assistance of the JVP, an internal crisis within the SLFP brings in its wake further signs of instability. On September 13 four senior ministers - G. L. Peiris. S. B. Dissanayake, Mahinda Wijesekera and Jayaraj Fernandopulle- resigned their cabinet portfolios and announced their determination not to join the new cabinet thus widening the internal crisis of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP), the major constituent of the ruling coalition People's Alliance (PA). Dissanayake claimed that their group comprised 12 parliamentarians and Peiris said he was absolutely certain that six of them would stick with them. Some felt that their strategy was to be with the Government Parliamentary Group and vote with the opposition at a crucial moment to topple President Chandrika Kumaratunga Government.

In a counter-strike against the gang of four former Ministers, President Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake targeted Jayaraj Fernandopulle, the weak-willed of the four, to break the dissident group. The President Kumaratunga in a chat with Fernandopulle lasting some four hours on 14 September succeeded in weaning him back to the fold. It was learnt that she withdrew her previous charge that Fernandopulle should bear responsibility, as Minister of Aviation, for LTTE's July 24 attack on Katunayake airport. He was sworn in as the Minister of Tourism, Aviation, Airport Development and Christian Religious Affairs.

Fernandopulle who along with the other three dissenters had earlier told President Chandrika Kumaratunga in their joint resignation letter that "the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between the ruling PA and the JVP is an obstacle to finding an acceptable political solution to the ethnic problem and the economic stability of the country" reversed his stand after the midnight meeting and said that he would stand by the President and help her solve the ethnic tangle.

When a reporter pointed out that the resignation letter he signed contained the paragraph, "the MOU between the PA and JVP has no provision to bring peace to the country by finding a political solution to the ethnic problem," Fernandopulle quipped, "We will change that."

Dissanayake sounded as if he was made of sterner stuff. When the Prime Minister requested him to resign his post of General Secretary of the SLFP he declined. He told him. "I was elected by trule SLFP members. This post was not granted to me by the President or Prime Minister."

That request was made when he met the Prime Minister before sending the joint resignation letter to the President. He told him that he had put the party into good shape after he took up the General Secretary post but his work was not appreciated by the President. Dissanayake and the other ministers who resigned with him had in recent times locked horns with the President.

He assured the Prime Minister, "We'll be with the SLFP and sit in the government benches. We'll also attend the meetings of the Government Parliamentary Group."

The dissidents assured the President in their resignation letter that "they would remain in the ruling parliamentary group and Sri Lanka Freedom Party."

JVP Gains

Political analysts believe that they gave this assurance to President to avoid expulsion from the government parliamentary group at this juncture. Sri Lanka's main opposition United National Party (UNP) sources said that the dissidents would come to their side at the appropriate time soon after the passage of 17th Amendment to the Constitution which enables the establishment of four independent commissions in respect of the police, elections, public and judicial services. The 17th Amendment is likely to be tabled in Parliament on September 18 and debated for two days from September 24.

The passage of the 17th Amendment in Parliament with the required two-third majority appears to be assured. It was a joint opposition demand. And JVP had wrested it from the Government. JVP Parliamentary Group leader Wimal Weerawansa said: "We had to wrench it out of a block of iron," making use of a pithy Sinhala idiom. "We won them for the people," said JVP General Secretary Tilvin Silva.

The government's agreement to the creation of the independent commissions was the fourth of the JVP's demand contained in its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government signed on September 5. The first was the cancellation of the Referendum scheduled for October 18 and the second the summoning of Parliament, a day before its scheduled September 7 reopening. The third was the sliming of President Kumaratunga's jumbo 43-member cabinet to one with 22 ministers. The number of deputy ministers too was pruned to 20 from 37.

Some critics ridiculed the JVP for their failure to get President Kumaratunga to reduce the cabinet to 20 as specified in the MOU and for its failure to get the President to drop corrupt ministers. Their target were Anuruddha Ratwatte, who was re-appointed Minister of Power and Energy and Deputy Minister of Defence, whom President Kumaratunga had apparently called "the most corrupt of the ministers" in the presence of the IMF delegation that visited Colombo in the last week of August and Mahipala Herath whose thugs were accused of involvement in the May 1 Mawanella attack on the Muslims. JVP is a signatory to the motion of no-confidence against Herath. But he had been appointed deputy minister.

These detractions would not belittle JVP's gains. It is hoping to achieve the rest of the major concessions as specified in the MOU - media commission in six-months, abolition of the executive presidency and the holding of parliamentary elections under a caretaker government at

the end of one year. It hopes to achieve these objectives considering the urgency with which government leaders acted to meet MOU deadlines.

Insurrection to Mainstream Politics

This is a novel experience to the JVP that launched two bloody insurrections, the first in 1971 against the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government and again in 1989 against President Ranasinghe Premadasa government. In both circumstances it was brutally crushed, families killed for involvement with the JVP. The new leadership, many of them had not even seen its JVP's founder Rohana Wijeweera, appears to be chartering a different course, mainstream democratic parliamentary politics.

This is a difficult course for the Marxist radicals against whom considerable prejudice exist in the minds of important sectors, especially the powerful business sector and the international community which are playing lead roles in the conduct of Sri Lankan affairs. At a meeting with the President in February third week business leaders aired their fears about the emergence of the JVP which had organized wildcat strikes in industrial establishments. President Kumaratunga allayed their fears by issuing stern warning to the JVP accusing it of wanton sabotage. Would she be able to adopt such sternness if JVP stages strikes in the coming months, business leaders query.

Analysts dismiss those fears as unjustified. The JVP is currently concerned about maintaining the new image it is building for itself a responsible, reasonable, respectful image and presenting itself as a group that is keen to promote the welfare of the people. It is dinning into the minds of the people that it values "principled politics" and more the interests of the people than the interests of its members or leaders.

A calculated campaign to tarnish this image has been unleashed in the past week. The UNP and the privately owned media over which it holds influence are at it. The fact that the JVP had ordered the import of ten new BMWs is being used to show that its parliamentarians are going the way of other politicians: the path of luxury; like other politicians they too preach one thing and practice another. The ten members now use an old van to transport them to parliament. The critics also use the recent 10 percent rise in the price of bread to prove that the government had begun to fool the JVP. A cap on prices, especially of essential goods, for one year was one of the promises the JVP extracted from the government in exchange for its support.

These are trivial charges. Serious charges are being leveled against the JVP on two main grounds: war and economy. The MOU did not pay attention to the solution to the ethnic problem, the most serious problem the country faces. In fact it forbids the Government from working out any agreement with the LTTE for one year and denies it the freedom to agree to devolution of power.

Tilvin Silva was questioned by the media on this lapse on September 4 and his reply was that that matter did not receive their attention during talks with the Government.

As exasperated Sinhala reporter asked: The next time Pirabaharan explodes a bomb are you going to say that you forgot about him? All that Tilvin Silva did was to join the mirth.

But when President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Luxman Kadirgamar said the MOU did not prevent them from talking to the LTTE, Weerawansa said they could discuss with the LTTE but they would oppose any agreement being implemented within one year.

JVP and the Ethnic Problem

The ideological stand of the JVP on the ethnic problem changed from time to time. In late 1960s JVP justified the Sinhala Only policy of Sirimavo Bandaranaike Government In its lecture on Indian Expansionism - one of the five lectures to its cadre - Federal Party was identified as a tool of expansionism and Indian plantation workers as foreigners who need to be forcibly expatriated. With the 1977 reorganization of the party its Tamil policy was revamped stressing on the need for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, granting of equal status for Tamil, abandoning of the policy of forcible repatriation of plantation labour and the recognition of the right of self-determination of the Tamil people. It started a Tamil newsletter called "Shen Shakthi." Its London branch issued in 1981 a statement supporting self-determination of the Tamil people. However, the pro-Tamil stand of the JVP failed to help the party to make headway among Tamil youth.

Since 1985, JVP returned to the Sinhala nationalist stand and opposed Indian involvement in the ethnic issue and the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of 1987. Currently, it opposes Norway facilitated talks with the LTTE and demands that the LTTE should drop its Eelam demand before the government talks to it.

JVP parliamentarian Nandana Gunatilleke rejected government claims that there was no bar to the Norwegian-backed peace moves with the LTTE. However, government ministers put on a brave face and said there was no contractual impediment for peace talks and the government's ambitious plan to "restructure public enterprises" meaning privatization.

"Our stand is that you can't have talks with the Tigers unless they give up their demand for a separate state," Gunatilleke said. "If the government wants to start talks with the Tigers now, then it is something that is outside the agreement we have with them. At that time, we will take care of it"

The Government is offering to talk to the LTTE to satisfy the international community and to show it that it was the LTTE that is the villain of peace and not itself. To appease the JVP President Kumaratunga told the media on September 14 that the LTTE had agreed last year to drop the Eelam demand.

LTTE negotiator Anton Balasingham criticised the Government's position as deception and demanded that it should amend its MOU with the JVP which bans talking about devolution of power if it is genuine about recommencing peace talks..

On the economic front the Government had agreed with the JVP not to enter into any new agreement with the IMF that would be detrimental to the peoplé of Sri Lanka and not to proceed with privatization. Under an International Monetary Fund agreement, the government has to raise 275 million dollars from privatization to qualify for a 253 million dollar credit. The Government is saying privatization will precede, especially the sale of the remaining Sri Lanka Telecom shares.

With these basic conflicts the question now asked is: Will the JVP continue to prop President Kumaratunga government, and for how long ?

Many in the business sector and international community wish the collapse of the PA-JVP agreement. Some hope for the revival of the PA-UNP talks which collapsed over the question of powers to the prime minister, the post which was offered to Ranil Wickremesinghe. But Ranil entertains the hope that he can to defeat the Government in parliament with the help of PA rebels headed by Peiris and Dissanayake and thereafter form a Government headed by him. But he has been nursing this hope for many years now without much success.

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'Taking Risk for Stability': JVP's New Role in Politics

Lakshman Gunasekera

"The progress of this world depends on the maintenance of order and the proper functioning of government," observed Kautilya Chanakya Vishnugupta some two thousand years ago in his Arthasastra (Arth. 1:4.4).

"Ratey sthaavarathvaya sandahaa api risk ekak ganna oney (we must take a risk for the country's stability)," argued Wimal Weerawansa MP, the chief spokesman of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna at a JVP media briefing last week to explain why the Peramuna was agreeing to support the People's Alliance government.

'Order', 'proper government' and 'risk ekak', are the catchwords of the times. That 'order' is important has been obvious to most in this part of the world at least since Kautilya made the point. 'Proper government' is something which has recently become important again as the country endeavours to reverse the trends of authoritarianism and constitutional mayhem that peaked with the last United National Party regime.

Mr. Weerawansa's "risk ekak" is very real in these times of insurgency, covert killings and a barely ended regime of torture, detention and death squads. Very much like the entrepreneurship so necessary for the unbridled capitalism the IMF and World Bank (and a few local laissez faire dogmatists) would like to impose on us, 'risk eka' is something all politicians must take if they are to succeed.

The JVP, more than any other group of politicians here should know all about the physical risks of politics here. Many in its ranks and leadership today are survivors of tremendous risks during the JVP's bloody Second Insurgency (1987-91) and the State's incomparably bloodier counter-insurgency. And the JVP's current leaders are heirs to an even older tradition of risk taken in the First Insurgency of 1971.

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga has also learnt about physical risks the hard way: first from the death of her father, then the death of her husband-cum-fellow activist, and finally, from her own narrow escape and permanent disability caused by guerrilla bombing.

And Velupillai Prabhakaran and his comrades are another elite band of risk-takers along with the rest of the Tamil militant movement. Of course, if one is to stretch the meaning of the word to the more passive dimensions of human experience, all of us Sri Lankans are living in times of immense risk due to the most violent conflict to ever ravage this island since human habitation began here.

Politicians, of course, take risks for various reasons. It could simply for very personal objectives of power and status or, it could be for altruistic reasons of governance and social need. Or, it could be for a mix of the two.

There are some politicians who have not had to take much risk in their journey to power and status - some because they are rich enough to be famous or to buy fame and, thereby, win power and others because of their kinship to the already politically powerful.

The JVP is clearly taking risks for a mix of reasons. There are cynics and those politically opposed to the anti-capitalist social movement the JVP represents who will argue that the JVP's motives are purely to do with personal power interests in the long term.

If that were the case, the JVP would not be what it is today. In the past thirty years, two successive generations of JVPers have risked their very lives in a violent contest for power - not for individual selves but for social causes. Rohana Wijeweera and his band of socialist revolutionaries launched their First Insurgency in 1971 for power not just for themselves but for entire social groups of impoverished, powerless people. Even if Wijeweera did dream of personal power and engineered the deaths of many rival political activists in intricate manoeuvres for power, he also had the compulsion of the social interests of millions behind him. That is why his people-based insurgency went as far as it did. And that is why the JVP still flourishes as a political movement despite the elimination of successive generations of leadership. That is also why the Tamil militant movement flourishes as a social movement and not merely as a (small) "band of terrorists" as its detractors would like to fantasize. Wimal Weerawansa talked about 'risks' in answering questions by journalists as to whether the JVP was aware that its new understanding with the People's Alliance could be far less than the stipulated 12 month period, and was a fragile and uncertain political relationship; that the Peramuna was attempting something which may not succeed at all.

The JVP was fully aware of the risk of failure; of the uncertainty of the whole project of 'probationary government', he replied. Both he and party General Secretary Tilvin de Silva argued that there was no option: the risks had to be run in order to try to return the country to even a modicum of stability.

This is exactly the same logic as that of the People's Alliance when, in 1994, with a just a single-seat majority in Parliament, the Alliance not only initiated a cease-fire and peace talks with the LTTE, but also launched on ambitious programme of constitutional reform - a programme it constantly asked the Opposition parties to join and which the UNP reluctantly did join. This was quite in contrast to the failure of the UNP under J.R. Jayawardana to convene the 'all-party conference' it promised to summon within a year on winning the general election of 1977 with a five-sixths' parliamentary majority. Even though it had little to risk, the UNP risked nothing at all and did nothing at all for nearly a decade except to exacerbate the ethnic conflict with successive, engineered anti-Tamil pogroms (so well discussed by Rajan Hoole in his recent book).

The JVP, then, is taking risks for complex political purposes today just as much as Chandrika Kumaratunga and the PA is doing. And its logic is similar to that of the President - stability in the face of a vacuum of power

engineered by hostile Opposition political groups ready to de-stabilise the whole country in their search for instant governmental power.

Quite unlike the PA and the JVP, Ranil Wickremasingha's UNP is not prepared to take risks to gain power. Rather, Mr. Wickremasingha is prepared to place the whole country at risk simply to attain personal power the easy way, having failed to win it through elections. Similarly there are elements in the People's Alliance too for whom personal power is more important than social interests or needs.

The risk the JVP is taking is not for immediate governmental power. Rather, if successful, the influence the Peramuna hopes to wield through its political pact with the PA will, on the one hand, bring social and political credit to it and, on the other hand, ensure a more level 'playing field' of politics to enable the party to perform better in future parliamentary contests.

The JVP is a political formation representing some of the most socially disadvantaged in the country and one that, due to its social base, is quite disadvantaged compared with the richer, socially diverse, centrist and right-wing parties. Hence, its interest in independent commissions as mechanisms of presumably neutral administration (if the modern State can ever be neutral!) that could help reduce the intimidatory politics of the more powerful parties during electoral contests. Hence also, its demands for restraint on privatisation and free market economics in order to ease the burden on the poor.

Nevertheless, as Wimal Weerawansa himself pointed out in that news conference at the Hotel Nippon, the JVP could have simply sat on the sidelines and not taken any risk at all - at least till the crisis matured further. It was the imminent danger of a vacuum in governance and of the possibility of right-wing conspiracies to take power circumventing the electoral process that drove the JVP to act sooner rather than later.

The JVP representatives at that news conference were generous enough to acknowledge the risks that President Kumaratunga and the PA were also taking in submitting to the Peramuna's conditionality. Both Messrs. Weerawansa and de Silva spoke of the "courage" of the President and the PA in risking much to come to an agreement with the JVP.

The President has the daunting task of managing an unwieldy coalition government within the disciplinary and policy constraints imposed by the PA-JVP accord. She must retain the cohesion of the coalition as well as the loyalty of aspiring back-benchers sans some of the conveniences of patronage politics such as ministerial portfolios and perquisites. The PA came to power promising not indulge in such lavish patronage politics but, as PA leaders have been readily admitting recently, the exigencies of a shaky coalition compelled such indulgence. Now, intra-coalition dynamics must be managed by means other than patronage - hopefully by persuasion and a revival of political commitment to proper norms of good governance. After all, the JVP, by its morally correct (and politically astute) refusal to take a share of the governmental pie in return for its parliamentary support for the PA, has brilliantly shown the way. It is all up to the PA's party managers. It is also up to those ambitious PA politicians who must decided whether personal pride and status (even after presidential chastising) is more important than political cohesion for the purpose of stability in the face of war and economic devastation.

If the JVP has shown remarkable adroitness in political strategy in making this deal with the PA, it has also begun showing a quick maturing as it gets closer to the centre of political power.

There were many who were cautious about the prospect of a PA-JVP tie-up because of the JVP's persistently dogmatic opposition to peace talks and ethnic power-sharing. The fear has been that JVP conditionality could restrain the Government from taking further initiatives in peace-making. Similarly, there are fears that the JVP's old-fashioned dogmatism and even more dangerous simplicism in economic policy could disrupt the current economic dynamics without the facility of alternative structures and trajectories being devised to replace them.

However, it is possible that its pact with the PA to prop up the government of an under-developed capitalist State has confronted the JVP with the practicalities of managing that State - especially in the context of a devastating ethnic war. At their news conference, Messrs. Weerawansa and de Silva indicated a significant shift in the JVP's posture towards peace talks: they indicated a readiness to allow peace talks on the condition that the LTTE eschews its secessionist project. This is probably the first time that JVP has shown readiness to entertain negotiations with the LTTE.

It is also possible that in the arena of economic management, too, the JVP may adopt more flexible positions. After all, the Peramuna is no longer on the sidelines but must prop up the government of the day to enable it to proceed with managing the economy, the nation and also, a debilitating conflict.

Here is the opportunity for the JVP to demonstrate that it is a political formation with the capacity to take over, in the future, the governance of a multi-ethnic, multi-class society which requires social and political transcendence. If it is to govern, the JVP has to learn to transcend its current politics of representing the interests of merely one social group that may have been in its original political constituency. Its abandonment of revolutionary strategy means that the Peramuna must learn to work through the complexities of bourgeois political-economy even as it grapples with the larger challenge of nation-state formation posed by the ethnic conflict. The heirs of Wijeweera must now sit alongside the representatives of the capitalist class as well as the militants of ethnic exclusivism and deal with them - whether or not the constraints of capitalism and ethno-nationalism can be overcome.

Messrs. Weerawansa and de Silva, at their news conference, were already talking of the masses having to make "sacrifices". This was precisely on the question of the Peramuna having to compromise on some of its long term policies in order to help prop up the PA government.

Can they persuade their original social base - the rural and semi-rural Sinhala poor and disadvantaged lower middle class - that short term sacrifices must be made and new perspectives adopted if peace and economic security is to be won in the long term?

(Courtesy: The Sunday Observer)

Ethnic Conflict: Taking Risks for a Better Future

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

Since 1957 when the Bandaranaike-Chelvanyagam pact was abrogated following the protest by the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists and the UNP which was then the main opposition party, several opportunities to settle the ethnic conflict have been lost. These failures intensified the conflict, turning it into a vicious war, which has resulted in the loss of over 64,000 lives and assets worth several billion Rupees. Nearly a million people have been displaced from their habitats and the population has faced many hardships. The country's economy and the administrative and social structures have all been shattered. The country is in deep political, economic and moral crises. The very foundations for building a vibrant nation in which the people of all races can look forward to economic, cultural and social progress have been damaged.

All these ruinous effects are well-known to all sensible persons. Yet the Sinhala and Tamil leaders have been reluctant to move away from their respective rigid positions on the long-standing ethnic conflict making its settlement difficult. Those who want a settlement within a united Sri Lanka, cannot be ignorant of the fact that without unity and political stability in a multi-ethnic country such as ours, peace and prosperity will remain elusive for all the ethnic communities. Any serious move towards reconciliation and unity aimed at securing lasting peace in Sri Lanka cannot ignore the importance of finding practical ways to unite the divided society.

Deep-seated suspicions and anxieties amongst the Sinhalese and Tamil communities have sustained their uncompromising positions. The war for separation has also received sympathy and support amongst a section of the Tamil community because of their distrust in the governments that have since independence ignored the sovereign rights and concerns of the minorities.

Constitutional reforms aimed at resolving the ethnic conflict if and when presented and approved by the Parliament with two-thirds majority cannot remove instantly the mutual suspicions and anxieties and the distrust of the Tamils in governments controlled by the majority community. With the recent agreement between the minority PA government and JVP, constitutional reforms to restructure the nature of the State and to devolve powers to the ethnic minorities have been shelved for one year. Nevertheless, without meaningful steps to allay the fears of both Sinhalese and Tamils, real or imagined it will not be easy to introduce such fundamental reforms. It is, therefore, necessary to recognise the two conflicting positions of the Sinhalese and Tamils and the factors that support them.

The Sinhala Position

The general position of the Sinha-lese on the ethnic issue can be seen from the comments of a reader published in 'The Weekend Express' of 21-22, July 2001:

1. The LTTE cannot be trusted. They only want talks in order to regroup, to rearm and to gain political mileage internationally. Their only objective is Eelam. Any agreement with the government will only be a step on the way to their goal.
2. The Tamils have communities in many countries where, in theory at least, they can seek refuge. The Sinhalese have nowhere to go except to the sea.
3. Any devolution of power will be a step on a slippery slope and will inevitably lead to separate state. The existence of a separate state will induce the central province (where the majority of the Tamils of recent Indian origin reside) to rise in rebellion and merge with it.
4. If India were to disintegrate, this separate state will merge with Tamil Nadu and bring unbearable pressure on the Sinhala state and population.
5. Even with limited devolution short of a separate state, the Tamils want an area exclusively for themselves coupled with the right to live in, and exploit, the rest of the country.

The view of the reader that "an unwinnable war is preferable to a settlement that will inevitably lead to the destruction of the nation and state", shows the thinking that is behind the opposition to an absolute federal system. Paradoxically, the feared destruction is already underway even without federalism. Similarly to the LTTE too war is preferable to a settlement that is forced on them without the political independence they want to escape from Sinhala hegemony.

V.P. Vittachi in his book, 'Sri Lanka - What went wrong?' has commented on the distrust of the Sinhalese in India since the time Britain gave independence to Sri Lanka. Not only the role of 'big brother' played by India in the 1950s and 1960s but also her direct role in the 1980's in first supporting the resistance of the Tamil rebel groups against J.R. Jayewardene's government and subsequently imposing on Sri Lanka a political solution to the ethnic problem have been detested by many Sinhalese. Besides the fear of Indian hegemony, the presence of nearly 60 million Tamils in south India has contributed to a psychological fear. The Tamil leaders in Sri Lanka by seeking the support of the political parties in Tamil Nadu at difficult times have sustained the suspicions and the fears of the Sinhalese of Tamil domination.

The Tamil Position

The neglect of the North-East region inhabited largely by the Tamils and Muslims was blatantly discriminatory and this coupled with other discriminations in university admission, official language and employment in the public sector, the governments themselves promoted the two-nations concept. The Sinhala nation received favoured treatment, while the Tamils were neglected because they were considered to be the descendants of ancient invaders. Significantly, under major colonization schemes implemented in this region many Sinhalese families from outside the Tamil region were settled there. This being the only major development programme implemented in this region, the Tamils viewed it as the insidious aim of the Sinhalese leaders to alter its ethnic composition. Additionally assigning Sinhala names to villages in the North-East which have been known by their Tamil names for centuries showed the intent of governments to marginalise the Tamils territorially.

An article published in 'The Island' of 9 August 2001 by "A Thamilan" lists the problems of being a Tamil in Sri Lanka. In 1955, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike keen to capture power came up with the slogan of 'Sinhala Only in 24 hours.' With this vote-winning move, he became the Prime Minister in April 1956 and "started implementing the promise on which he rode to power." The contributor's comment that after the adoption of this policy, "a fringe group known as the Federal Party which would have died a natural death, if not for Sinhala Only, suddenly became popular among the Tamils and won many seats in Parliament," is also applicable to subsequent acts of omission and commission which gave rise

to the violent struggle for separation.

The media-wise standardization of examination marks for selecting students to the universities as intended denied entry to many capable Tamil students who were qualified to enter on the strength of their raw marks. This scheme was introduced by the government led by Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike to please the Sinhalese. Like many other Sinhalese leaders, Mrs. Bandaranaike too compromised long-term national objectives for short-term political gains. This has been the trend to this day and the Sinhalese too are paying dearly for this general weakness of their leaders.

Having pledged to address the grievances of the Tamils in 1976, the UNP leader J.R. Jayewardene after obtaining the unprecedented five-sixths majority in the general elections opted to take up a belligerent stand on the Tamil issue. He truly believed that by physical force the Tamils could be subjugated and compelled to give up their demands. Although the LTTE reluctantly agreed to accept the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord, it later rejected the Provincial Council system introduced in terms of the Accord because the arrangement did not fulfil their political ambition.

No genuine desire

Subsequent events confirmed the view that there was no genuine desire by the government to devolve powers to the regions. The system was simply a device to meet the then exigency when India was keen on ending the ethnic conflict that drove thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils to Tamil Nadu seeking refuge there. It did not emerge as a sincere desire of the government to promote the development of the regions or to meet the aspirations of the Tamils and Muslims. It was also quite clear that both India and Sri Lanka did not want to be seen as granting any special status to the (temporarily) merged North-East region. Hence, powers though limited to specific subjects have to be devolved to all other provinces symmetrically. With the dissolution of the North-East Provincial Council, the system is now a white elephant consuming needlessly large amounts of public funds.

V.P. Vittachi's description, "throughout the British occupation of Sri Lanka and for many decades after independence, Jaffna Tamils had a disproportionate advantage over the Sinhalese in higher education and well paid employment" cannot be challenged. The Tamils were in this position not because they denied opportunities for the Sinhalese to learn and compete with them for the lucrative jobs but because they used education as a means to earn a living.

Vittachi has also noted that "the climate in Jaffna being arid, employment in Colombo was considered vital for survival." There were many Jaffna Tamils like this writer's father with some English education who had found employment in the Federation of Malay States and Burma for the very same reason. The Tamil resentment was with the way, the successive governments embarked on correcting this imbalance. Not only the method aimed to deprive the Tamils of opportunities in education and employment without opening alternative avenues for livelihood but also it exhibited revenge.

The aversion to develop industries, ports and other sectors in the North-East, despite the known potential to boost the country's exports was also because this region was not Sinhala land. Thus, the concept of two ethnically divided territories in Sri Lanka was given meaning and vitality by the Sinhalese leaders. V. Thirunavukkarasu in his rejoinder titled, "Sri Lanka's real tragedy of errors" published in "The Weekend Express" of 21-22, July 2001, has quite rightly said - "the LTTE is the very product of the sins of omission and commission of successive Sinhala chauvinist rulers."

Hardening of Extreme Positions

With the resumption of attacks by the LTTE immediately after withdrawing from the peace talks in 1995 and the subsequent

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'war for peace' waged by the government, the two extreme positions of the Sinhalese and the Tamils hardened. What happened since then was "destruction, rape and death on a massive scale." The victims of rape were all Tamil girls and women and the criminals were the members of the security forces. With the exception of one case, namely that of the young girl Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, the culprits who had raped and murdered other Tamil women were not brought to book.

Attempts to cover up the horrid crimes committed by security personnel against Tamil civilians only made the situation worse. The revenge attacks committed by some members of the security forces against the Tamils presuming they were 'Tamil Tigers' or their associates had only helped the Eelamists in their propaganda campaign. No efforts were made by the PA government to win the confidence of the Tamils and draw them away from the extreme position taken up by the LTTE and its sympathizers.

The 'war for peace' and the stalled constitutional reforms that were initiated in 1995 belied the expectation of the Tamil masses that the new leader Chandrika Kumaratunga would be their saviour. Merely repeating her belief in a political settlement via constitutional reforms without demonstrating the government's commitment to it by meaningful actions that were possible under existing constitutional provisions, the President was seen to be concerned more about the war than the peace effort.

Glaring contradictions

A precise review of the party politics and the thinking of political leaders that had directly or indirectly influenced many acts of omission and commission in Sri Lanka over the past several decades (V.P. Vittachi has covered in great detail the J.R.Jayewardene era in his book) shows glaringly two sorts of contradictions. One is between the expressed views of leaders on important national issues while in the opposition and what they actually do after acquiring the seats of power. The other is between their words and deeds while holding the reins of government. When these contradictions relate to matters affecting the minorities, the distrust of the minorities in the ruling party gets intensified. The two rival political parties have no compelling reason to be concerned about winning or losing the trust of the minorities, when under the unitary system their political fortune depends largely on the preference of the Sinhala voters. This too is another reason for the Tamils to reject this system altogether. Many Sinhala nationalists believe that Sri Lanka is the country of the Sinhala Buddhist. (For example see the reply to Thamilan by B.H.G. in 'The Island' of September 1, 2001.) At the same time, they reject the concept of a Tamil nation, although the Tamils have a common identity, a common language, a common history, a cultural tradition, a defined territory and a common way of life. It must be emphasised that the perception of many Tamils as belonging to a separate Tamil Nation and having the right of self-determination emerged only after their rights and concerns were neglected by successive governments since independence. It was the compelling response to the claim of Sinhala-Buddhist nation and the policies and actions of governments based intrinsically on this notion.

In a truly unbiased and soul-searching article (Some thoughts for a constitution - The Island September 5, 2001), Percy Wickremesekere commenting on the competing "historical claims" of the Sinhala and Tamil nationalists has pointed out "no useful purpose would be served by entering into these so-called historical claims and arguments" as these will not help to find a political solution to the ethnic problem that will secure lasting peace. If the leaders had wisely viewed the future not from a historical perspective but futuristically, Sri Lanka would have been a peaceful and prosperous nation. Sri Lankan leaders wanted to imitate the development of Singapore without adopting this attitude!

Interestingly, it was not the Tamils but the Kandyan Sinhalese who wanted a federal system in the late 1920s, fearing they would be discriminated as a minority by the low-country Sinhalese. But paradoxically, it was the minority Tamils who were discriminated after independence by the governments dominated by the Kandyan and low-country Sinhalese. Tamils wanted then only adequate representation in the government to prevent being discriminated by the majority Sinhalese. The Tamils demanded a federal state only after experiencing more problems than the Kandyans feared in the 1930s. It is relevant to note that the Tamil leaders accepted the unitary system in the Soulbury constitution after the Sinha-lese leaders gave the assurance that the Tamils would not be subjugated by the majority Sinhalese.

Broken promises

The saga of broken promises, abrogated pacts, non-implementation of declared policies and disregard of the legislative acts enacted under the amended constitutional provisions to deal with some major problems faced by the minorities had also strengthened the grounds for severing the links with Colombo. A case in point is the amendment made to the Official Language Act after 31 years of Sinhala Only, whereupon Tamil also became an official language. But even in 2001, this has not made life easy for many Tamils because the equal status given to Tamil is larg-ely on paper.

The rapid erosion of the trust the Tamils had initially in the unitary system of government, is in sum due to the unwillingness of the Sinhalese leaders to accept that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-regional country (the diverse regional features originating from the different settlement patterns of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims) and act accordingly. The inability of some Sinhalese leaders to comprehend the nature of the ethnic problem is also due to their majoritarian mind-set. The influence that the Sinhalese extremists, including the powerful Buddhist prelates have over the elected governments has been a major obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the problem. As a result of this peculiar practice, not only national unity but also democracy has been compromised.

For all these reasons, the Tamils want a political arrangement within a united Sri Lanka that will enable them to exercise their sovereign rights for their advancement and security with some control of the government in Colombo for safeguarding the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

JVP's Doctrinaire Approach

Those who refer to the JVP as a Marxist party, have not understood fully the principles of Marxism. Sinhala chauvinism has no place in it. JVP wants to strengthen and preserve the unitary system with all its weaknesses that the ethnic minorities have rejected after enduring discrimination, indignity, insecurity and denial of their collective rights since independence. JVP had in the past shown its chauvinistic colour whenever a political solution to the ethnic problem was considered. It opposed fiercely the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord. In July 1995, JVP called for a referendum on the devolution proposals drafted by Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam and Professor G.L. Peiris stating that concessions to minority Tamils amounted to a betrayal of the nation. In October 1997, it joined with the influential Buddhist clergy to oppose the government's ethnic peace plan. JVP has also objected strongly to Norway's efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict. Its pro-Sinhala nationalist stand does not allow foreign organisations to perform a similar role.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding between the PA and JVP that was signed on September 5, the government must refrain from bringing in proposals for devolution of power or any other proposals that may lead to controversy until a broad

consensus is reached in cooperation with all segments of society. In effect, this means that without a southern consensus the centralised system that has served mainly the interests of the Sinhalese cannot be altered. Tilvin Silva, general secretary of the JVP in an interview with the Sunday Times (September 9, 2001) clarified his party's stand on the national issue. He said: "The government wants to devolve power but we want to give equal rights and to restore democracy to solve the national issue." JVP has also indicated that a solution on the above basis should be first drawn up and then the peace talks with the LTTE can begin, provided its leader "denounces Eelam publicly." JVP with a Marxist label playing the role of honest promoter of democracy and political stability has not considered the continuing ethnic conflict to be a major cause for the present crisis. When Karl Marx called for the unity of workers, he did not restrict it to any particular ethnic group.

As Percy Wickremesekere has stated in his article referred to earlier, "a constitution of a country cannot merely address the needs and aspirations of a section of its people even though that section happens to be the majority in the country. It cannot be a constitution that satisfies the aspirations of only sixty or seventy percent of the people although that percentage represents a majority of the people in the country. This is more so in a country like Sri Lanka where substantial sections of linguistic and religious minorities live. Therefore, the constitution to be acceptable should address the ground realities in the country." JVP's doctrinaire approach to solve the ethnic problem has completely ignored the turmoil and disunity that emerged from the centralised administrative system. We have today a polarised society and a de facto separation of our motherland.

Taking Risks?

The ground realities in Sri Lanka today are such that granting equal rights and restoring democracy within the unitary system will not convince the majority of the Tamil people that they need not fear about the kind of discriminations and tribulations faced over the past several decades. For instance the provision making Tamil also as an official language had no impact on the Tamil speaking people.

Wimal Weerawansa MP, the chief spokesman of the JVP at a media briefing said that the Peramuna was fully aware of the risk of failure of the whole project of 'probationary government'. But at this critical time, "there was no option: the risks had to be run in order to try to return the country to even a modicum of stability", was the explanation given for propping up the minority PA government for one year. Surely, if the JVP leaders are sincere Marxists they could have tried to build trust between the divided communities. There were not even any encouraging words to build trust between the divided communities. JVP never even thought of what President Chandrika Kumaratunga did in 1994 to convince the Sinhalese people about the validity of Tamil grievances and the need to solve their problems. Are these not worthy causes for taking risks?

The concluding remarks of Percy Wickremesekere are also very relevant for solving the ethnic problem and achieving lasting peace. "We are aware that in making these proposals we may very well incur the wrath of those false Sinhala Veerayas beating their war drums far far away from the theatre of war and even our friends in the JVP who parade before our people as the guardian angels of the unitary state. It is our view that incurring the wrath of these sections is well worth and a paltry price to pay if we could put an end to this senseless war and begin the process of uniting our divided motherland - the motherland of both the Sinhalese speaking and Tamil speaking people." Unless all the parties including the JVP take the risks and strive to solve the ethnic problem in a realistic way taking into consideration the ground realities, there is little hope for a better future for the vast majority of the people of all races.

Jayalalitha Battling Hard for Survival

G Sambedkar

It is indeed some very troubled times for Jayalalitha. The ticking of the clock has begun to assume rather menacing tones for her as the deadline for her to get elected to the Assembly is closing in on her.

If she is not into the legislature by Nov.14 this year, she will have to step aside, nominate someone else as the new Chief Minister and wait out till she manages to have the conviction in corruption cases reversed.

She is leaving no stones unturned in her efforts to get a speedy hearing from the courts on her revision petitions, and of course a favourable verdict too. Such is the reputation of the Indian judicial system that the general belief is whatever the merits of her case, she would be able to obtain a 'not guilty' verdict sooner than later and re-emerge as the Chief Minister, even if she is constrained to resign for a short period in the interim.

But her arch rival Karunanidhi is not keeping quiet either. Using his clout at the Centre to the hilt, he is checkmating her at every move.

Jayalalitha has been sentenced to varying terms in three corruption cases. In the Kodaikanal Pleasant Stay Hotels case, she was convicted to a one year rigorous imprisonment. It was when protesting this sentence that the AIADMK cadres had set afire to a college bus in which three girl students perished.

The stronger blow was in the TANSI land scam, which relates to the sale of the properties of the Tamil Nadu Small Industries Corporation (TANSI) to the Jaya Publications and the Sasi Enterprises at well-below the market rates, causing a huge loss to the exchequer. While in the Jaya Publications case, she was awarded a three-year term, in the other she got two years.

It was the conviction in the TANSI cases which blocked her way during the recent Assembly polls. She should have hoped that if only she was voted back to power and she somehow managed to get herself installed in Fort St.George (housing the state secretariat), she could get the sentences reversed, go on to contest a by-election, win and thus ensure that her continuance as the Chief Minister for the rest of the term too.

Since the Election Commission norms stipulate that anyone sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment is disqualified from contesting elections, her first priority on becoming the Chief Minister was to have the TANSI convictions reversed.

Strings were pulled to move her appeals up, to the very top of the list of pending cases in the High Court. Sensing what was going on, a couple of prisoners challenged the priority given to her when cases dating back to seven years ago were still pending. They were brushed aside by the judiciary, and a date was set for the commencement of the hearing.

But destiny seems to have different plans for her. At the moment of writing this article (Sep.5), the odds seemed to be stacked against her, and Chennai was afloat with rumours that she could step down any time, by way of pre-empting a possible adverse verdict in the Supreme Court on the Quo Warranto petitions filed against her.

Yes, two public interest litigation petitions filed in the Supreme Court questioning the validity of her appointment as the Chief Minister despite her electoral disqualification seem to have upset all her fond calculations.

While many were surprised at the alacrity with which the then Governor Fathima Beevi had her sworn in as the Chief Minister, they did not seek to make an issue of it at that time, stunned as they were by the scale of her victory.

In as much the AIADMK front had gone to polls projecting her as the Chief Ministerial candidate even after her disqualification and the front had won, it must be construed that she had been pardoned by the people and their sentiments respected, it was argued.

Still the TANSI cases could not be wished away, and hence a lot of energy was expended on nullifying them. The saga, with its innumerable twists and turns, js ideal material for a political thriller.

Actually the case in which she stands accused of accumulating wealth disproportionate to her known sources of income was said to be far more damaging to her. She would get the maximum punishment contemplated under the Prevention of Corruption Act, seven years of rigorous imprisonment, it used to be confidently predicted.

But with the change of regime, the Special Court proceedings have been turned into a virtual charade, and no one expects anything much to happen in that case now.

To be on the safe side Jayalalitha filed revision petitions in both the TANSI and the Pleasant Stay Hotels cases. The idea was that while a TANSI acquittal could help her contest elections, still someone could challenge her continuance if her conviction in the Hotels case was not reversed, and hence it too should be reversed.

First the TASNSI cases were posted against a judge who had let her off lightly when a public interest litigation petition was filed challenging traffic disruption and other inconvenience caused during her now disowned foster son Sudhagaran's wedding in 1995.

But reportedly thanks to the pressure mounted by the DMK on the Centre, the case was pulled out from the listings at the last moment and posted before another judge.

When the DMK wanted to know how fairness could be expected on the part of the prosecution when the AIADMK was in power, the court appointed a special public prosecutor for the purpose, K.V.Venkatapathy who was actually the government's counsel in the TANSI cases during the DMK regime.

Next it was revealed that the court had chosen to hear only Jayalalitha's revision petitions in the TANSI and Pleasant Stay Hotels cases and not those of the others convicted. The SPP raised objections. The new judge would only say that he had been directed to hear her petitions only.

The attention turned to the role of the then Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, N.K.Jain. A signature campaign was launched against him, and the

DMK added to the pressure. Justice Jain was abruptly shifted to the Karnataka High Court.

Then the SPP demanded that he be given enough time to go through the voluminous documents, running to thousands of pages, before taking on the defence. The request was turned down, and the hearings commenced. Legal luminaries like K.K.Venugopal started arguing her case.

In between a former official of the registration department who had first submitted that the TANSI lands were sold at prices below the guideline values now claimed that such a submission had been born out of non-application of mind.

Actually the property in question lay in the Alandur suburbs, not in the costlier Adyar region. Now the sudden realization came to him after he was suspended on the last day of his service by the present Jayalalitha government.

And the submission was made before the Special Court trying a third TANSI case involving a private firm and in which case Jayalalitha or Sasikala are not among the accused.

The strategy was clear. Since the High Court itself would not entertain any fresh submissions from any of the witnesses, and the case is argued out only on points of law, the AIADMK hoped to raise suspicions both in the minds of the judges and the public on the credibility of the entire TANSI case, through such submissions.

Venugopal's argument, the official's somersault, the judge's attitude, everything seemed to point to a happy denouement for Jayalalitha. But SPP Venkatapathy had other plans. He promptly went to the Supreme Court praying that the case be transferred out of Tamil Nadu. Equally promptly an interim injunction was granted, taking everyone by surprise.

Even before she could recover from the blow, a five-member Constitution bench started its hearings on the Quo Warranto petitions. Right from the beginning, the judges seemed to make their unhappiness clear.

"What will happen if she is unseated? What are the contingency plans in place?

Should the cabinet too have to go out with her? If, as you say, Governor Beevi was only respecting the people's mandate in making Jayalalitha the Chief Minister even though she had been electorally disqualified, then where is the place of law in the scheme of things? Could anyone, however disqualified on any grounds, be invited to form the government simply because people vote for him or her?..."

Advocate Venugopal found it hard to cope with such a fusillade. He in fact was believed to have apprised her of the trend in the trial and even advised her to step down for the moment, at least by way of appeasing the Supreme Court.

It was the TANSI case appeal which was far more important. Even if the quo warrantos were upheld and she had to go out, she could surely come back to power once her name was cleared in the TANSI cases, it was suggested to her.

Hence why not resign, impress the judges with her readiness to respect the law and then hope for the lifting of the injunction in the TANSI cases, which could in turn mean expeditious hearing in the Madras High Court, culminating in her exoneration?

She would not have landed in the present mess if her efforts to woo the BJP had succeeded. But the DMK is comfortably perched in the NDA, and neither Vajpayee nor Advani seem willing to court disaster yet again. To wriggle out of the present crisis, she could of course make anyone of her minions the Chief Minister and remote-control from behind. But then the problem is that she has never trusted anyone else.

What if her successor turns against her at some stage, splitting the party or some such thing, throwing haywire her carefully laid plans?

Damned if she did, damned if she did not. That was the cruel dilemma haunting her in the first week of September.

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General Musharraf's Judgment Day

Dr. William Maley

On the morning of 11 September 2001, hundreds of Pakistani Muslims were brutally and wickedly slain. These young people, many of them the pride of their families because of their achievements in attaining higher education abroad, were just a small sample of those who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center in downtown New York. For the Government of Pakistan, their deaths posed a fundamental challenge: should one side with the innocent victims, or the evil perpetrators? If defending its own people is the mark of a decent government, then it should be clear what course of action President Musharraf and his associates must now take.

Of course, the dilemma which the general faces is acute. On the one hand, if he stalls on meeting the demands of the US, he not only dishonours those Pakistanis who died last week, but faces the awesome wrath of an aroused and enraged US Administration, fully backed by the US public. Pakistan would risk being declared a state supporting terrorism, which would have an immediate and devastating effect on the economy. IMF assistance would be blocked, and capital investment would dry up. The military government would be hard pressed to survive.

On the other hand, if Musharraf meets Washington's demands, the extremists in the self-styled 'Afghan Defence Council' (which is neither Afghan, nor defensive, nor a Council) may try to mobilise their supporters in a campaign of street violence to bring the Government down. And the rhetoric of the Taliban now contains thinly-veiled threats to Pakistan. Crunch time has finally come.

How has this come to pass? And what lessons are there for Pakistani leaders? The explanation of Pakistan's plight lies in a hubris which gripped its military leadership as a result of the events of the 1980s in Afghanistan. The attitude took root that it was Pakistan that had defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan, and that this gave Pakistan the right to determine who should rule Afghanistan in the post-communist era. Elements of this attitude were blatantly on display during the Afghan 'Shura' in 1989, which was shamelessly manipulated by the ISI and Saudi Intelligence.

When the communist regime collapsed in 1992, the ISI set its heart on elevating its long-term client Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to a position of dominance, and persisted with the fatuous demand that President Burhanuddin Rabbani (who was not a reliable ISI client) should relinquish office 'pursuant to the Islamabad Accord', even though Hekmatyar had torn that accord to shreds with his military attack on Kabul on 1 January 1994. Hekmatyar's failure even then to secure territory led General Naseerullah Babar to embark on his crusade of promoting the Taliban, another horrific error of judgment on Pakistan's part.

Former Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik, one of the last survivors of the generation of diplomats who made Pakistan respected worldwide, has been reported as saying that 'we are dealing with people who live in prehistoric times, who are very committed to their views, and don't see modern logic or reason.' The lesson here is obvious: as the proverb goes, those who sup with the devil should use a long spoon. Rather than sponsoring medieval surrogates, Pakistan must accept the Afghan leadership which ordinary Afghans select - not a leadership selected for Afghans by Islamabad. But there is a larger lesson here as well.

Truth needs to become the foundation of Pakistan's approach to the world. To put it bluntly, Pakistan's Afghanistan policy has been built on the dissemination of myths, illusions, and mendacious fabrications. Long past the point where a single mature adult believed a word that Pakistani officials uttered, the claim was repeated that Pakistan had no favourites in Afghanistan, and was not backing the Taliban. This did Pakistan no good at all, and also undermined the points of strength in Pakistan's arguments over Kashmir. India has been watching with undisguised satisfaction as Pakistan has dug its own grave as a credible regional and international actor. Diplomacy suffers -indeed, it becomes an exercise in the absurd - when fantasy rather than truth is propagated as the basis for conversation between states, and Pakistan should not delude itself that it can any more get away with the kind of dissembling it has practised in the past.

Is there any silver lining to the storm clouds which have gathered on Pakistan's horizon? Perhaps. Reports suggest that the Musharraf regime has presented a range of demands to the US to be met in exchange for cooperation, notably requests for debt relief and mediation over Kashmir. Such demands are almost certainly put forward solely to help boost Musharraf's domestic credibility, for he can be under no illusions that he is in any position to bargain with Washington at present. After years of deceit from Islamabad, the new US Administration is in no mood to accept such an approach. But in the longer term, Pakistan may gain something from choosing wisely how to proceed. The message to Washington from the tragedy of September 11 is that if a bleeding wound is not treated, it gets infected - to quote a prescient observation which an Afghan elder once made to the scholar Barnett R. Rubin. Afghanistan was one bleeding wound that was not treated and became severely infected. Pakistan could be another, and it makes sense to staunch the bleeding before further infection sets in.

Pakistan has deeply-rooted problems, but many have arisen through no fault of those who today make up Pakistan's population. Appropriate packages of long-term support for Pakistan therefore make good sense. The madrassas have blossomed partly because of the decay of the state school system. Support for modern schooling for Pakistani children would be money well spent. It would also be worthwhile to devote resources to widening the horizons of journalists in the vernacular media. The English-language press in Pakistan carries the writings of some of the best and most courageous journalists in the region, but the Urdu press cannot compare in sophistication; and it is the Urdu press which the average Pakistani is more likely to access. Finally, for the very long run, it is important to foster accountability and the separation of powers. Pakistan has for too long relied on the dubious wisdom of strong men. What it needs is institutions through which ordinary people can rule well.

[The Friday Times, 21 September 200. Dr William Maley is Associate Professor of Politics, University College, University of New South Wales, Australia. His most recent monograph is The Foreign Policy of the Taliban (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2000).]

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WEDDING BELLS

Sivakamasunthary *daughter of Mr. K & Mrs. K. Kumaravel of 6 Holmes Close, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9LQ and* **Ramesh** *son of Mrs. R. Sinnarajah of 7456 Mary Avenue, Burnaby, British Columbia V3N 4ZB, Canada and late Mr. T. Sinnarajah on 1st September 2001 at Oshwal Centre, Coopers Lane Road, Northaw, Herts.*

Sivaharan *son of Mr. & Mrs. C. Sivapragasa Pillai of 12, 4/1 Rohini Court, Rohini Road, Colombo 6 and* **Sivanuja** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Ratnasingam of 48 New Chetty Street, Colombo 13 on 2nd September 2001 at Saraswathi Hall, Colombo 6.*

Sujithra *daughter of Dr. P. & Mrs. J. Ambikapathy of 'Gohulam', 71 Glendale, Swanley, Kent BR8 8TP, UK and* **Srikanthan** *son of Mrs. J. Ramakrishnan of 335 Deguire Blvd., # 411, St. Laurent, Quebec, H4N 1P7, Canada and of the late Mr. Ramakrishnan on 2nd September 2001 at Kadwa Patidar Centre, Harrow, Middx.*

Shivanthini *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Anandeswaran of 33 Sagara Road, Colombo 4 and* **Shankaraj** *son of Mr. & Mrs. Sathianathan of 51 St. Peters Place, Colombo 4 on 6th September 2001 at Mayurapathy Suppammal Wedding Hall, Colombo 6.*

OBITUARIES

Ranga Cumarasamy, *Founder & Chairman of Contracts & Supplies (Engineering) & Ceygma Water Pumps in Sri Lanka; loving husband of Jamuna; beloved son of late Mr. & Mrs. W.M. Cumarasamy; son-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. P.V. Ramakrishna; loving father of Ram Mohan (London), Priyadarshini (Singapore), Viswesh (C&S/LWS Colombo) and Darshan; father-in-law of Mitsuko, Warran Rangan (Standard Chartered, Singapore) and Inoka; loving grandfather of Danuisca; dearest brother of Rukmani Rasiah, late Gopal Cumarasamy and of Annalakshmy Ambalavanar, late Durai Cumarasamy, late Dr. Krishna Cumarasamy and of Narayani Sabaratnam, Viji Cumarasamy, Ram Cumarasamy, Pathi Cumarasamy, Sathyabhama Rajalingam, Thiripurasundari Yoganantham, Janagalakshmi Raja Mohan; brother-in-law of late N. Rasiah, and of Margaret, Saraswathy, Ranee, late T. Sabaratnam and of Gnaneswary, Chandra, Thilagawathy, Yoganantham and Kannan Raja Mohan passed away on 10th August 2001 and was cremated on 13th August at Kanatte, cortege leaving his residence at 168/9 Inner Flower Road, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka.*

With deep sadness and sorrow the entire family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them during the period of bereavement.

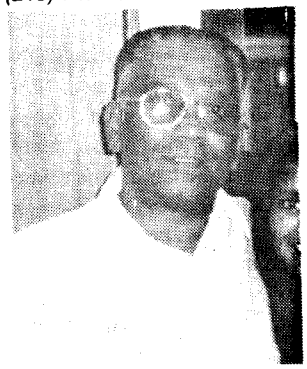
Mr. R. Kumarakulatungam, *Transportation Engineer, State of New Jersey, USA; formerly Superintending Engineer, Public Works Department, Sri-Lanka and Chief Engineer, Ministry of Works and Housing, Kaduna, Nigeria; beloved husband of Kamala; loving father of Ravindran, Rohini and Surendran; father-in-law of Shantha, Selvendra and Inthumathy; grandfather of Saranya, Shawn, Sanjay, Sanjana and Sandhya; brother of Roger. V. Kumar (Georgia, USA), Ranee Cumarasamy (New Jersey, USA) and Dr. Rajasekeran (Lancashire, UK) passed away in UK on 25th August 2001 and was cremated at the North East Surrey Crematorium, Morden, Surrey on 29th August.*

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of sadness. - 19 Beresford Road, Cheam, Surrey SM2 6CP.Tel: 020 8770 9549.

M. 'Palm Grove' Theagarajah *(b. 21.02. 1909), son of late Mr. and Mrs. S. Muttutamby of Mannar Veedu, Vannarpannai, Jaffna; husband of late Annaledchumy ('Baby'); brother of late Mrs. Somasundharam, late Mrs. S. Rajadurai, late R.K. Sundharam, Mrs. M. Emmanuel, Mrs. M. Rasiah (both of Kuala Lumpur), Mrs T. Saravanamuttu, Mrs. S. Balasingham (both of Sydney) and Mrs. Y. Mahesa (Toronto) passed away peacefully on July 03,2001 in London where he was cremated on 09 July.*

He is survived by sons Kumaranayagam ('Jeyam') and Biswanath ('Rajah'); grandchildren Prathusha, Gowri, Prasanti and Gurunath and great-grandchildren Kabilan, Annamika and Saranya, all in the USA and Canada.

The family wish to thank relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent wreaths and messages of sympathy and comforted and assisted them in their bereavement – T. Kumaranayagam, 1102, West 29th Street, Apartment #2, Los Angeles, Ca. 90007, USA. Tel: (213) 747 7073.



Dr. T. Harichandran *(71), eldest son of the late Mr. & Mrs. I. P. Thurairatnam; beloved husband of Sugirthmalar; loving father of Dilo (Aust) Ronny (USA), Susie*

continued on page 31

continued from page 30

(Aust); precious grand father of Vikram, Nishan, Krishan, Arun & Deion; affectionate brother of Balan (Zambia), Saji (NZ), Mano (Cyprus), Saku (Sri-Lanka), Mahen (NZ), & Mithy (UK) and brother-in-law of Vimala, the late Dr. T. Paramananthan, Mary, Charlie (Indran), Rajini & Niran passed away peacefully on 31.07.01 after a brief illness and was cremated on 06.08.01 in Wellington, New Zealand.

The members of the family thank all relatives and friends for their messages of sympathies and support during this period of grief. – Dr. M. Niranjanan, 5 Barrie Pavement, Wickford, Essex SS12 9DR.

IN MEMORIAM

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-flitting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread, –
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed,
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream, we feel the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

'Tis the wink of an eye; tis the draught of a breath
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud;
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

(By William Knox, 1789-1825)

Mr. Ponnudurai Narendra Nathan, *most dearly beloved and adoring husband of Gnanambal; dearest loving and proud Appa to your children, Dr. Thrinayanhi Jegathambal, Dr. Mrs. Sowmya Wijayambal, Mrs. Sobhana Meenambal, Dr. Mrs. Priyadarsani Brahathambal, Adhithya Thrilochanan, Mrs. Vasutharini Girijambal, Agasthya Ponnambalam and Ambika Dhakshayani; father-in-law of Dr. P. Arulampalam, S. Raveendran, T. Ilangovan, R. Srikanthan and Dr. Mrs. Meera Narendranathan; darling dearest Thaththa to your grandchildren, Abhirami Janani Raveendran, Amarnath Thirumadhavan Raveendran, Nirmala Arulampalam, Janaki Saruhasini Srikanthan, Janarthanan Ragavan Ilangovan, Dhivya Saraswathy Ilangovan, and Divani Kruthika Narendranathan.*

Dear Appa, in our mind. . . a constant thought; in our heart. . . a silent sorrow; but always with pride and love; ever present. . . ever missed. . . ever loved. . . especially on this the seventh anniversary of your passing away on the 24th September 1994. God Bless. (Address: 53 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 8JQ).

In Memoriam

In Loving Memory of Our Beloved Mother

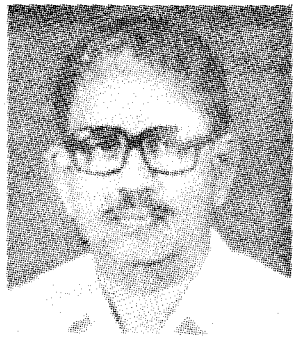
Born ***Died***
12.08.1916 ***24.09.2000***

In Loving Memory of
Mrs. Pathmavathy Selvanayagam
of Jaffna Sri-Lanka
on the first anniversary
of her passing away on 24.09.2000.
'LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE
LAST FOR EVER'

Affectionately remembered by your loving children, in-laws, grandchildren and great grandchildren.
6 Brook Road, Redhill, Surrey UK.

IN MEMORIAM

Tenth Anniversary Remembrance



In loving memory of **Mr. Devarajan. N.,** *FSI., Licensed Surveyor, Leveller and Valuer of 257 Arasady Road, Kantharmadam, Yalpanam.*

Fondly remembered on the tenth anniversary of his passing away on 11.9.91 by his beloved wife Padma; brother Punjaksharam; sister Mrs. Saraswathy Panchadcharam; children Sujithan, Siva Kumaran, Rajam, Jeyaraman, Rengan and Raj Iswari; sons-in- law Theventhiran and Nirthanakumaran; daughters-in-law Jeyadevi, Suhanya, Thangalogini and Helan; grandchildren Jamuna, Karthika, Bharathan, Uththami, Luxmanan, Sri Ram, Vaitharani, Vithuran, Devarajan, Poorani, Pavithran and Dhurrka; sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives and friends. - 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3AZ.

In Ever Loving Memory of Our Dearly Beloved Daddy

T.J. Rajaratnam

Retired High Court Judge

called to rest 15.9.81

In God's care you rest above
While in our hearts you dwell in love
Unseen, unheard, yet very near
Still Loved, still missed
And very Dear.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by your ever loving wife Arul, children Rohini, Renuka, Rajiv, sons-in-law Vijayan, Sriharan, grand-children Vasi, Ravi, Prathi, Jayanthy and Ajit.

IN MEMORIAM (ctd)

In loving memory of **Mr. Kandiah Gunaratnam** *on the first annivesary of his passing away on 13th September 2000.*

Sorrowfully and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Parameswary; loving children Niranjani (London) and Nehru (Canada); son-in-law Dr. Navaneetharajah (London); daughter-in-law Vasanthy (Canada); grandchildren Nishanth and Navena. – 24 Poulett Road, Eastham, London E6 6EG.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Oct 1 *Full Moon; Feast of St.Teresa of the Child Jesus.*

Oct 2 *Feast of the Guardian Angels.*

Oct 5 *Sankadakara Shathurthi.*

Oct 6 *Karthigai; Purattashi 3rd Saturday; South London Tamil Welfare Group. (SLTWG) Drop in. Tel: 020 8542 3285; Feast of St. Bruno.*

Oct 7 *Feast of Our Lady of Rosary.*

Oct 8 *Feast of St. Dennis.*

Oct 13 *Krishna Eekathasi; Purattashi 4th & last Saturday.*

Oct 14 *Pirathosam; Feast of St. Callistus.*

Oct 16 *Amavasai.*

Oct 17 *Navaraththiri Viradham starts.*

Oct 18 *Feast of St. Luke.*

Oct 19 *Sathurthi.*

Oct 20 *SLTWG Navaraththiri Celebrations. Tel: 020 542 3285.*

Oct 21 *Shashti.*

Oct 23 *Saraswathi Poojah starts.*

Oct 25 *Feast of the Forty Martyrs of England & Wales.*

Oct 26 *Vijayadhasami Widhyerambam; Keethara Gowri Viradham starts.*

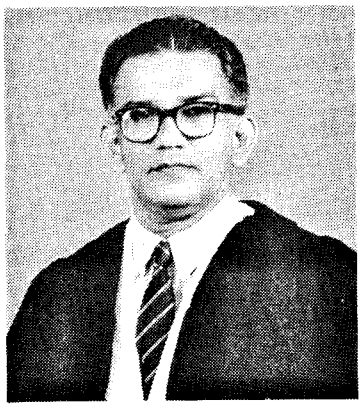
Oct 27 *Sukkla Eekathasi; SLTWG Drop in. Tel: 020 8542 3285.*

Oct 29 *Pirathosam.*

Oct 31 *Full Moon.*

Mr. K. Pooranampillai –

A tribute paid at Methodist Church, Wellawatte, Sri Lanka, while the Funeral Service was being held at Folkestone, Kent, UK.



To be the head of two prestigious educational institutions for so many years in the North of Sri Lanka each with a history of more than 175 years is unique in the annals of educational circles. He had an unbroken record of continuous headship for well over three decades. After a near quarter century of steering Hartley College, Point Pedro into lofty educational heights, he retired prematurely and accepted a clarion call by the Governing Body of St. John's College, Jaffna, old boys, well wishers, parents and teachers to come over to Macedonia to calm a turbulent period of uncertainty when the previous principal took ill and there was no head for quite a few months. Generations of students and teachers and also educational institutions in other parts of the island will undoubtedly proclaim him as the most outstanding principal of all times to be head of two different educational denominations, which have turned out to be citadels of distilled and refined learning.

The purpose of paying this humble tribute is not to list the various reforms he made at St. John's during a period of nine years (1967-1976) but to relate specific instances which bring out his spirit of determination, vision in the horizon and his intangible values of educational excellence. Nothing would waver him from maintaining the priorities of educational standards and discipline. During my continuous period, as teacher from 1953 to 1980, I worked with five principals, but the longest was with Mr. Pooranampillai. K.P. is how we refer to him.

In one instance a boy was weak in English but the parent literally begged of him to give a statement that his son's English standard was passable to enable him to get employment in the Middle East. K.P. refused but went a step further and said that he would help him individually to improve his English. This K.P. did for a continuous period of two months. The boy dramatically improved and the desired statement regarding his standard of English was given. K.P. never sacrificed his clear conscience at the altar of cheap popularity

To K.P. the value of true sportsmanship should be exhibited at all times in any game. On one occasion in an important cricket match in the early seventies our captain had called back an opposing player who was given out by the umpire for a slip catch. The next day K.P. was in his element at the school assembly. This was a good example where he could hammer down his idea of sportsmanship that our captain had exhibited. The intangibles of educational values were spelt out in a very tangible way.

The refined education was percolated drop by drop into the very marrow of the student without the student even realising this. But later on in life when he journeys into the unknown wide arena, he realises that there is an unknown factor which makes him different from many others; a factor that makes him choose the correct values in life though he might be surrounded by the moral decadence of worldly pleasures. This in essence is what KP visioned for the distant future of his students and the intangibles of good education that accompany such a vision.

He always coupled educational and moral values with deep spiritual insights. He was chosen Vice-President of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka when he was at Hartley College – a post that can be held for only one year. He was one of the few Vice-Presidents who turned down an offer to go abroad for a short time. His wife Peace is in every sense a living monument of the well known dictum that behind the success of every man there is always a woman. He also leaves his two daughters Shanti Arulanandam and Dr. Vasanthi Karunakaran and son Jeyakumar, sister Gnani Nalliah, brother Devanandampillai and many grand children, relations and friends. Thousands of his students and colleagues spread all over the globe will pay homage to a man of 92 who shaped their destiny to steer through their life's pilgrimage with determination, dedication and divine insights.

Farewell Sir, We salute you.

V.R. Amarasingham

Colombo 06.

Highgate Murugan Temple Helps Jaffna Medical Students

The Highgate Murugan Temple (UK) has initiated steps to sponsor the education of medical students at the Jaffna University. They had organised a carnatic vocal concert by Thrichur Sri Ramachandran on 10th June 2001 which realised a net income of £2700. It is proposed to remit this amount to the Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University to finance the medical education of three deserving students selected by them. The temple offers its grateful thanks to all those who helped in

continued on page 33

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this project, and invites all those interested to contact the Chairman of the Brittania (Siva) Temple Trust which manages the temple at the address 200A Archway Road, London N6 5BA.

Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Gajenthini and Anushiya

Family and friends gathered at the Auditorium of the Sir John A. Macdonald Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, Toronto, on 11th August 2001 to acknowledge accomplishment of Gajenthini Selvarajah and Anushiya Jeyalingam – accomplishment in their chosen extra-curricular field, Bharathanatyam. The occasion was the Bharathanatyam Arangetram or debut of Gajenthini and Anushiya, disciples of Mrs. Ananthy Sasithran of **Sri Lalithakalakendhiram.**

Gajenthini and Anushiya effused confidence and energy with grace and poise, the ingredients for a credible presentation, commendably directed by their Guru and mentor Mrs. Ananthy Sasitharan who had obviously put them through their paces with patience and diligence, involving several years of hard and strenuous work. Their performance was attestation to their commitment and passion for Bharathanatyam an unique Art form, physically very demanding and providing ample scope for aesthetic expression. The momentum on stage was sustained from the onset, supported ably by a musical ensemble led by Mr. Vasuthevan Rajalingam on the Miruthangam with excellent Vocal support from Mrs. Prema Sriskantharajah and Vijeyaluxmy Seenivasagam. Instrumental support was provided by Mr. Sridas on both the Flute and the Veena and Mr. R.S. Kesavan on the Violin.

Nattuvangam by Guru Ananthy Sasitharan rang through the entire performance crisp and clear giving rhythmic direction for the intricate movements of body and limbs delineating the anecdotal content of the lyrics for the enjoyment of the audience.

As is customary, the finale of the evening's repertoire was a Thillana and it is to be noted that this particular Thillana, in the raga Kaapi, was a composition of Mr. Sridas, the well known versatile Instrumentalist, Guru Ananthy's Father and Director of **Sri Lalithakalakendhiram** *which presented Gajenthini and Anushiya on their debut, following that of sisters Malini and Shanthini Lackumananathan, just weeks earlier on the 30th of June.*

Gajenthini and Anushiya must be congratulated for a flawless performance to the utter delight of the invited Audience, Guru Ananthy for sustaining and harnessing their interest in this exclusive Art, to the extent of being able to prepare them for a presentation of this calibre and the **Sri Lalithakalakendhiram** *for feeding the nostalgia of the immigrant Tamil population in Toronto, justifiably seeking recognition for its rich Artistic heritage in the multi-cultural environment of their adopted land.*

Nanthiny Ganeshalingam.

Sheer Excellence Marks Abhirami's Debut

Kumari Abhirami Vivekanandarajah is a medical student at the University of Toronto and music is intrinsic for her well-being. She believes firmly that it helps refine our inner and physical selves. Encouraged by her very devoted parents, Abhirami began playing the violin at the age of eight; on Sunday September 8, 2001 she performed her arangetram in the presence of dignitaries in the world of music, enthusiasts of the Carnatic school, relatives and friends at Toronto's Markham Theatre for Performing Arts.

The occasion was graced by her Guruvin-Guni Sangeetha Kalanidhi Professor T N Krishnan as the chief guest and Mridanga Vidwan Professor Trichy Sankaran of York University as guest of honour. Abhirami had her foundational training when her family lived in Oman under Guru Isai Kalamani Sri V R Krishnan and later in Canada she came under the tutelage of Guru Srimati Vijayaluxmi Seenivasagam. Finally she became a sishya of Sangeetha Vidwan Thanathevy Mithradeva. An accomplished vocalist too, Abhirami became the first Teacher's Grade graduate successfully completing examinations conducted by the Thamil Isai Kalaamanram.

The first artiste also to stage a violin arangetram in this part of the world, Abhirami's performance was flawless and music flowed with the greatest of ease from her strings. She performed like a maestro; so confident was she in handling the varied compositions she had chosen for her debut concert.

They were in the ragas Reethigowla, Nataai, Arabhi, Poorvikalyani, Dwijavanthi, Lathagi, Thodi, Yaman Kalyani, Kapi and Desh. She also performed another number in Ragamalikai. The Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi was rendered in the Thodi raga and was received with a spirited acclamation from the audience.

Her accompanying artistes were Gana S Ganapathy (mridangam), Ravi Balasubramaniam (Ghatam), and Apama Battacharjee (Tambura) each of whom gave a good account of themselves with their respective instruments.

On behalf of the Thamil Isai Kalaamanram, Bharathi Kalaamanram and the Sruti Laya Fine Arts Academy, Messrs Thampiah Sripathy, N R Subramaniam and S N Dhakshi, a 72-year old fellow music student of Abhirami, felicitated her. An artiste with a great promise was the popular impression of the evening.

Victor Karunairajan, Canada.

Gratitude to SCOT

Sri Sarada Sevashrama
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PROJECT Officer
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Gratefully acknowledge the receipt of £2673 from the Standing Committee of the Tamil Speaking people (SCOT), U.K being the amount from the benefit show by Music Academy of Drama, Rhythm And Strings (MADRAS) and Academy of South Indian Arts (ASIA) on 11th November 2000 "We are always indebted to SCOT and all its members for their continued support for several years.

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AGM of Kokuvil Hindu College OSA

The Annual General Meeting of the Kokuvil Hindu College Old Students Association (UK) will be held on 30th September 2001 at Colston Primary School Hall, Greenford, Middlesex. The proceedings will commence at 1300 hrs and members are invited to attend.

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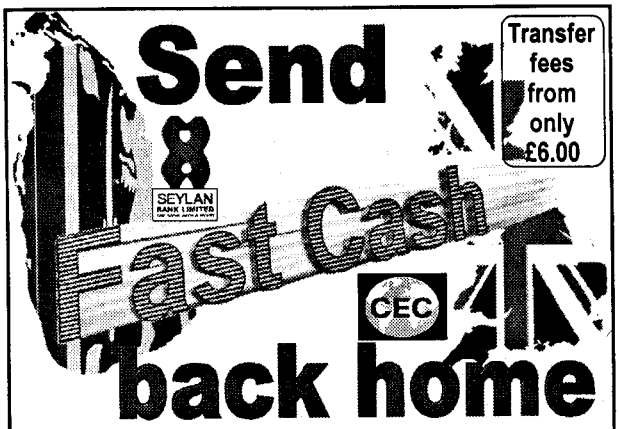

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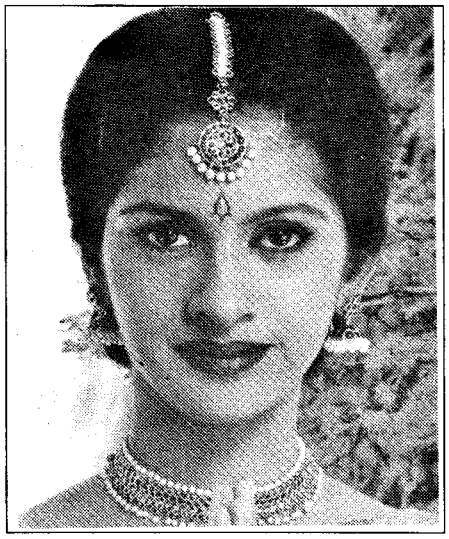

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